

# Men's Health

Many Australian men do not look after their own health very well. They tend to avoid or delay regular health checks and their health is often poorer than that of women the same age. Men can often improve their health with changes to diet, exercise and other lifestyle habits.

## Some health issues

**Bowel cancer** – more common in men than women. Risk increases over the age of 50 years.

**Depression** – depression affects about 1 in 6 Australian men, and men are more likely to suicide than women. Men often do not recognise the symptoms of depression and so do not seek help.

**Erectile dysfunction (ED)** – ED, or impotence, means being unable to get and/or keep an erection that allows sexual intercourse. ED is common, but most men do not like to talk about it with their doctor. Some medical conditions can lead to ED (e.g. diabetes, obesity, heart disease, high cholesterol, Parkinson's disease). Drinking too much



alcohol, smoking, stress and some medicines can also cause ED.

**Heart disease** – men are more likely to die from heart disease than women. Risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking and overweight, which are more common in men.

**Low testosterone** – testosterone is a male sex hormone. A low testosterone level can be caused by disorders of the testes or pituitary gland, or other health problems (e.g. obesity). Testosterone levels also fall as men age. Symptoms of low testosterone include being tired, feeling irritable and less sex drive.

**Male pattern hair loss** (baldness) – causes some men great distress.

**Prostate disease** – more common in older men. The three main prostate problems are:

- benign prostatic hyperplasia/hypertrophy (BPH) – the prostate gland gets bigger and affects urine flow
- prostate cancer
- prostatitis – prostate becomes sore and swollen, usually due to infection.

**Testicular cancer** – more common in younger men, but can occur at any age. May cause a hard lump, swelling or pain in a testicle.

## Some lifestyle issues

**Alcohol** – more men than women drink harmful amounts of alcohol, which increases the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, sexual problems, depression, accidents and violence.

**Being overweight** – around 2 in 3 Australian men are overweight, increasing their risk of high blood

pressure, high cholesterol, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, osteoarthritis and some cancers.

**Smoking** – more men than women smoke and die from smoking-related illnesses (e.g. cancer, heart disease, airways disease).

**Physical activity** – many men do not get enough exercise. Regular exercise helps to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, and control weight. It can also help relieve stress, improve sleep and improve feelings of wellbeing.

## Self care

A number of health issues are more common in men than women. This may be due to the way men deal with health and lifestyle issues. Of course some health issues only affect men.

### Have health checks and tests – ask a doctor

#### Bowel cancer

- Faecal occult blood test (FOBT) – checks faeces for blood. Have a regular FOBT check if you are over 50 years.
- Sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy – if necessary, a doctor can use a special instrument to look at the inside of your bowel.

#### Blood pressure

- Ask your doctor about regular blood pressure checks.

## **Cholesterol**

- Ask your doctor about regular blood tests for cholesterol.

## **Prostate disease**

Ask a doctor about checks for prostate problems. Prostate checks include:

- Digital rectal examination (DRE) – a doctor inserts a gloved finger into the rectum, to feel if the prostate is enlarged or abnormal.
- Prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test.

## **Testosterone deficiency**

- A blood test can check hormone levels.

## **Testicular cancer**

- Regularly (e.g. monthly) check your testicles for hard lumps, swelling or changes.

## **Have a healthy lifestyle**

- Don't smoke.
- Limit alcohol to no more than two standard drinks in one day.
- Exercise at a moderate level for at least 30 minutes on all or most days of the week.
- Eat regular, healthy meals, including plenty of fruits, vegetables and wholegrain foods. Limit foods high in fat, sugar or salt.
- Keep to a healthy weight.

## **Important**

Seek medical advice and a full health check, if you:

- are over 40 years of age
  - are overweight
  - notice changes in bowel habit or urine flow
  - notice a lump or change in either testicle
  - are experiencing ED
  - feel stressed
  - plan to start exercising.
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- Drink enough water every day to satisfy your thirst and to keep your urine 'light-coloured' (unless a doctor advises not to).
  - Learn and use relaxation techniques to manage stress.
  - Talk about problems with someone you trust – a friend, relative or health professional.

## For more information

### **Andrology Australia**

For information on erectile dysfunction, androgen deficiency, prostate problems and testicular cancer.

Phone: 1300 303 878

Website: [www.andrologyaustralia.org](http://www.andrologyaustralia.org)

### **Impotence Australia**

For information on erectile dysfunction

Phone: 1800 800 614

Website: [www.impotenceaustralia.com.au](http://www.impotenceaustralia.com.au)

### **Australian Men's Shed Association**

Phone: 1300 550 009

Website: [www.mensshed.org](http://www.mensshed.org)

### **What's Your Score?**

Website: [whatsyourscore.com.au](http://whatsyourscore.com.au)

### **Healthdirect Australia**

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: [www.healthdirect.org.au](http://www.healthdirect.org.au)

### **Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)**

Your pharmacist can advise on CMI leaflets.

### **NPS Medicine Wise**

#### **Medicines Information Line**

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)

### **The Poisons Information Centre**

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

### ***Pharmacists are medicines experts.***

***Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.***

## Related fact cards

- » *Alcohol*
- » *Depression*
- » *Diabetes Type 2*
- » *Erectile Dysfunction*
- » *Exercise and the Heart*
- » *Fat and Cholesterol*
- » *Fibre and Bowel Health*
- » *Hair Loss*
- » *High Blood Pressure*
- » *Prostate Problems*
- » *Relaxation Techniques*
- » *Smoking*
- » *Weight and Health*

Your Self Care Pharmacy: