

# Men need to take care

- Jamie Lober Special to the Reporter-News
- Posted December 14, 2009 at 8 p.m.

Men may have many excuses for not seeing a doctor for a checkup — but none of the excuses are good. By the time they reach their mid-30s, men may find themselves with increased responsibilities with their careers and families — but this is also when men need to start taking better care of themselves. Healthcare professionals encourage men to take control of their health across all ages and stages, but this takes on greater significance after 35.

“It is important for men to make prevention, early detection and management of chronic disease a priority,” said Scott Williams, vice president of Men’s Health Network of Texas.

For men in their mid-30s, it is important to stay physically active.

“You decrease your muscle mass after the age of 35, so you have a decrease in testosterone,” said Ron Richards, director at Hendrick Health Club.

Strength training is the prescription to increase muscle mass.

“It helps you burn calories and keep your glucose levels under control because diabetes is something you want to watch out for,” Richards said.

Doctors note the importance of testing for and monitoring diabetes, which over the past several years has become a widespread problem for people of all ages.

“If you are overweight, you should have your blood sugar and blood cholesterol checked to make sure they are in a good range,” said Dr. Steve Gao, internal medicine physician at Hendrick Health System.

Sexual health can be compromised by diabetes. “After a few years, you may have nerve or circulation damage and can become impotent,” Gao warned.

All men should have their blood pressure and cholesterol checked every year. Once they know their numbers — establishing a baseline — then they can concentrate on what they can do to maintain or improve their health.

“I want to encourage men to love their health, love their families, stay physically active, eat right and take a walk,” said Frann Smith, corporate market director at American Heart Association.

Williams encourages men to get an electrocardiogram to screen for heart abnormalities starting at age 30 for a baseline. Then for men in their 40s, he recommends getting one every four years; for men in their 50s, he recommends one every three years.

Men should begin to pay attention to their nutritional intake.

“We have to get back to the basics where we are eating fresh vegetables and fruits in our diet and not so much beef,” Smith said. As men age, they should be more conscientious of maintaining a well-balanced diet.

Once a man reaches 60, it is advised he get a bone mineral density test — so steps can be taken to keep bones strong and healthy for later years.

For men who smoke, there’s just one recommendation: quit immediately.

This will help reduce related problems, like heart attacks and lung disease. “Narrowing of the arteries and eventually sex life will be affected,” Gao said. A chest x-ray is recommended for men who smoke and are over 45.

There’s a higher risk for health complications for smokers and if smoking-related diseases run in the family.

“If your father smoked and developed lung disease at age 60 and you smoke, there is a guarantee that the gene will be passed on and you will get emphysema,” Gao said. “If you do not smoke at all, regardless of whether your dad had lung disease or COPD, you are not going to get it.”

Men with a family history of prostate cancer should have their prostate checked between age 40 and 50, Gao said. “You should not just use the PSA or blood test but the finger test, or digital rectal exam, too,” Gao said.

Men in their 40s and 50s should have a hemoccult, in which the physician looks for blood in the stool — which is an indicator of colon cancer or polyps.

Finally, men in their 50s, 60s and beyond should have a testosterone screening, especially if experiencing fatigue, erectile dysfunction, depression or low sex drive.

A good blue print for men's health begins with paying attention; getting to know one's body is a good defense.

For busy men, this is particularly important.

Untreated diseases that grow into major problems will dramatically alter a lifestyle — and force him to become a far less active and busy man later.

<http://www.reporternews.com/news/2009/dec/14/men-need-to-take-care/>

Eat healthy

Eat a variety of fruits, vegetables and whole grains every day.

Limit foods and drinks high in calories, sugar, salt, fat and alcohol.

Eat a balanced diet to help keep a healthy weight.

Be active

Be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Include activities that raise your breathing and heart rates and that strengthen your muscles.

Protect yourself

Wear helmets, seat belts, sunscreen and insect repellent.

Wash hands to stop the spread of germs.

Avoid smoking and breathing other people's smoke.

Build safe and healthy relationships with family and friends.

Be ready for emergencies. Make a supply kit. Make a plan. Be informed.

Manage stress

Balance work, home and play.

Get support from family and friends.

Stay positive.

Take time to relax.

Get 7-9 hours of sleep each night.

Get help or counseling if needed.

@Briefs headline 2: Get check-ups

Ask your doctor or nurse how you can lower your chances for health problems based on your lifestyle and personal and family health histories.

Find out what exams, tests and shots you need and when to get them.

See your doctor or nurse as often as he or she says to do so. See him or her sooner if you feel sick, have pain, notice changes or have problems with medicine.

Regular check-ups are important.

Source: cdc.gov