

MEN'S HEALTH

Australian men visit doctors less often than women and tend to wait longer before having health problems treated. As a result, their quality of life is often lower than that of women as they age. The good news is, with regular health check-ups, most of the common health problems that affect men can be prevented or improved through simple lifestyle changes. Ask your pharmacist about ways to improve and maintain your health.

Men's health issues

A number of health issues are more common in men. In some cases it is because men are simply at more risk, but often it is due to how men deal with health issues.

Heart disease – is the most common cause of death in Australia and men are twice as likely to die from it than women. Major risk factors are high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

High blood pressure – is slightly more common in men than women and the risk increases with age. Even a slightly raised blood pressure is a risk factor for heart attacks and stroke.

High cholesterol – men are slightly more likely than women to have high cholesterol. This becomes more common in men after the age of 35.

Prostate problems – there are three main prostate problems:

- **Enlarged prostate** (benign prostatic hyperplasia or BPH) - as men get older the prostate gland may get bigger and can upset normal flow of urine.
- **Prostate cancer** – this is the most common cancer in Australian men.
- **Inflamed prostate** (prostatitis) – the prostate becomes sore and swollen.

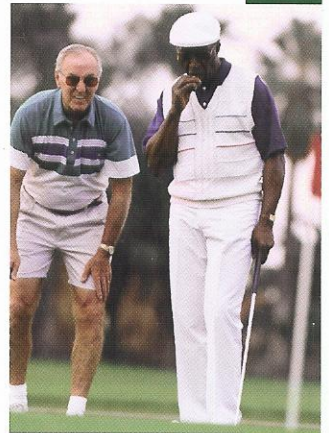
Testicular cancer – is more common in younger men, but can occur at any age. It often causes a hard, painless lump on a testicle.

Bowel cancer – is the second most common cause of cancer in Australia. Bowel cancer is slightly more common in men than women.

Erectile dysfunction

(ED) – is when a man is unable to get or maintain an erection. ED is a common condition, but can be upsetting and embarrassing. Most men are reluctant to discuss it with their doctor. ED is not a normal part of ageing and may be caused by a medical problem, such as diabetes or high blood pressure. Excessive drinking and smoking and some medications can also cause this problem.

Male pattern hair loss – this is a common problem which may cause great distress.



Lifestyle factors

Being overweight – Men are more likely to be overweight than women. Being overweight increases the risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, heart attack, stroke, diabetes and osteoarthritis.

Eating – men generally eat more fat. A diet high in fat may also play a part in causing prostate cancer.

Physical activity – many men do not exercise regularly. Regular exercise helps keep weight at a healthy level, lowers blood cholesterol and improves the way the body uses glucose. Increasing physical activity may also help reduce the risk of bowel cancer.

Cigarette smoking – smoking is estimated to cause 40% of deaths in men under 65 years. Around a quarter of Australian men still smoke despite the strong link between smoking and many diseases.

Alcohol – men are more likely than women to drink harmful amounts of alcohol. Excessive drinking increases the risk of high blood pressure and high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke and depression. Alcohol can also cause erectile dysfunction.

Self care

Screening

Prostate disease

- **Prostate specific antigen (PSA)** – a special blood test can help to find out if you have a prostate problem. If you are 50 years or older, ask your doctor about having regular prostate checks (see *Prostate Problems* Fact Card).
- **Digital rectal examination (DRE)** – your doctor may be able to feel your prostate is not normal by inserting a gloved finger into your rectum (back passage).

Bowel Cancer

- **Sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy** – these are the best way to screen people at high risk of bowel cancer
- **Faecal occult blood tests (FOBTs)** are a simple way to pick up people who may need further testing with their doctor
- If you are at a high risk of bowel cancer, talk to your doctor about having regular check ups (See *Bowel Cancer* Fact Card).

Testicular cancer

- Monthly self examination is recommended for all men to help detect this problem at an early stage.

High blood pressure

- Blood pressure monitoring – have your blood pressure measured every year if you are over 40 years and more often if you have high blood pressure (See *Blood Pressure* Fact Card).

Male pattern hair loss

- There are several ways this condition can be improved – ask your doctor or pharmacist. (See *Male Pattern Hair Loss* Fact Card).

High cholesterol

- **Cholesterol testing** – a simple blood test can pick up people with high cholesterol levels.

Lifestyle changes

- **Smoking** – get ready to quit (See *Smoking* Fact Cards).
- **Alcohol** – limit alcohol to 1-2 drinks a day.
- Learn to relax and manage stress (See *Relaxation Techniques* Fact Card).
- Talk about your problems with someone you trust – a friend, relative or health professional (See *Mental Health* Fact Cards).
- Exercise boosts energy, increases 'good cholesterol' levels and makes it easier to off burn stored fat.
- Be active at least 30 minutes each day (See *Exercise & the Heart* Fact Card)
- Eat regular, healthy meals and do not skip meals. Resist food high in fat or sugar. Eat more fruit, vegetables and low fat/ high fibre foods.
- Try not to add salt to food, control your weight (See *Nutrition* Fact Cards).

Other relevant Fact Cards:

- *Mental Health*
- *Smoking*
- *Bowel Cancer*
- *Nutrition*
- *Exercise & the Heart*
- *High Blood Pressure*
- *Prostate Problems*
- *Relaxation techniques*

Contact

Your doctor (listed under Medical Practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book).

For more information phone **Impotence Australia** on (02) 9280 0084.

Your Self Care pharmacist. To find: (02) 6283 4777.

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

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