

## **Better Man Tomorrow: A Men's Health Primer**

**“Financial Retirement” planning versus “Health Retirement planning”:** Many of us over 50 start to take a closer look at our financial situation as we approach retirement. Are we on track? Do we need to save more? Are our investments too aggressive or conservative? Do we need to get some professional help to figure things out? What if we took the same approach to our future “retirement health” by asking the same questions? Are we aging well or do I need to start getting serious about taking care of myself? Do I need to seek out professional help to figure out the complexities of health? We would all do much better if we talked and thought about our future health in the same vein.

### **The Problem with Men:**

Men may be the stronger sex when it comes to strength, but we are definitely the weaker sex when it comes to Health care

Men are less likely to seek medical care including regular check ups. We tend to put things off, sometimes only going to the doctor when we can't work or during a crisis.

More than half of women over the age of 65 are widows.

Men are 5 times more likely to suffer from hearing loss.

Men live an average of 5 years less than women and have more chronic illness than women. We tend to have riskier behaviors and more addictions to alcohol, drugs, and smoking.

Although two thirds of men and women are overweight, men tend to carry their extra weight around the midsection/waist line compared to women who carry extra weight around the hips and thighs. The extra abdominal fat for men is particularly dangerous since it contributes to strokes and cardiovascular disease.

### **So what's up with Men?**

Although there are hormonal differences between men and women, most of the health related differences can be attributed to lifestyle and behavioral differences.

1. **Work stress:** Ever heard of “Karoshi”? Japanese work culture is so intense, especially for men, that the term “karoshi” actually refers to “death by overwork”. It is well known that chronic stress is a contributor to heart disease and chronic inflammation.
2. **Social connections:** Men tend to not cultivate the type of social networks that women do often leading to isolation and depression, especially with advancing age.
3. **Risky behaviors:** Bottom line here is that men tend to take more risks which can often lead to accidental deaths, chronic injuries, and mental health issues.

4. Medical care: Men are more likely to not seek regular medical care. Most men do not have annual physicals and are not as vested in their personal care until something “breaks down”.
5. Exercise: Although this applies to women as well, life has become too easy and sedentary. Most of us are not getting the minimum levels of daily recommended exercise of 30 minutes per day. Now would be a great time to dedicate yourself to a regular exercise program. Start with tracking your steps with your goal of over 5,000-7,000 steps per day. Also, revisit the 5 Pillars of Health course to make sure your regular exercise program has all the essential components.
6. Nutrition: Women tend to pay closer attention to the type of foods they consume versus men. Women are more likely to have a diet richer in fruits and vegetables as compared to men.
7. Substance abuse: Men are more likely to abuse alcohol, drugs, and smoke. Often self-destructive behaviors that can lead to early death and chronic disease.
8. Mental health and anger issues: Men are almost 4 times more likely to commit suicide and to be abusive to their spouse or partner. Men seeking mental health help are often deemed “weak” and therefore their issues can go unresolved.

Whether it’s a combination of masochism, being too busy, or just neglect, us men need to be better. We need to take the time to take care of ourselves if we want to be better than the “average male”. Let’s be better than that!

**Become the CEO of your Health**: We are all responsible for our own health, NOT our doctors. Take charge of your health and start taking steps in the right direction. A small change today can not only reap huge rewards tomorrow, it can change the trajectory of your future self.

**Most important health changes you can make today:**

1. Smoking and alcohol: If you smoke, STOP as soon as you can regardless of how long you have been smoking. Lung function can start to improve in as little as 2-4 weeks. Ideally, you are not drinking any alcohol but if you do, limit yourself to no more than 1 drink per day.
2. Nutrition: Avoid highly processed foods (basically anything that comes in a box, has a mascot, or a jingle). Avoid going “on a diet” as this implies that you will eventually go “off your diet”. Instead, think about it as making healthy lifestyle changes. Don’t start something that isn’t sustainable for the long-term. Most restrictive fad diets are not sustainable and can lead to greater weight gain after you stop. Start slowly with just a few lifestyle changes first. [Here is a video to help you get started with weight management without cutting calories.](#)
3. Get moving: Movement is life, stillness is death. Move more, live longer, period. Here is a great place to start, [5 Pillars of Health](#)
4. Physician visit: If you haven’t been to your doctor in the last 1-2 years for a routine physical, schedule it now. We don’t wake up one day with chronic disease, it’s a slow drip and early detection is key.

### **What's most likely to kill me?**

1. The leading cause of death in men is heart disease followed by cancer. Metrics we should all know off the top of our head include our blood pressure, resting heart rate, total cholesterol (HDL and LDL breakdown), and triglyceride levels.
2. What should my lab values look like?

Total cholesterol	Under 200	High cholesterol levels can limit blood flow, contribute to plaque buildup in arteries leading to increased chance of stroke and heart disease
Low Density Lipids LDL levels	Under 100, 70 is ideal	"Bad" type of cholesterol. Contributes to plaque buildup in blood vessels. Increases your chances of stroke and heart disease.
High Density Lipids HDL levels	Over 60	"Good" cholesterol. Absorbs cholesterol and carries it back to the liver. The liver then flushes it from the body. High levels of HDL cholesterol can lower your risk for heart disease and stroke.
Triglycerides- a type of fat (lipid) found in your blood.	Under 150	<p>When you eat, your body converts any calories it doesn't need to use right away into triglycerides. The triglycerides are stored in your fat cells. Levels go up if you regularly consume more calories than you burn. High levels of triglycerides can lead to thickening and hardening of the arteries.</p> <p>The difference between triglycerides and cholesterol: Both are different types of lipids that circulate in your blood:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Triglycerides store unused calories and provide your body with energy.</li><li>• Cholesterol is used to build cells and certain hormones</li></ul>
Blood pressure	Less than 120 over 80	Prolonged high blood pressure can cause blood vessel damage that leads to heart disease, kidney disease, and stroke.
Resting heart rate	60-100 beats per minute	Ideally the lower the better. Means your heart isn't working as hard to circulate blood.

**Top 4 most common forms of cancer in men:**

Skin	<p>Affects light skinned men greater than dark skin men. Protect yourself by limiting your UV exposure and use a 30 SPF sunscreen protector. Be aware of any moles or changes in your skin. Have a regular skin exam by your physician.</p> <p>Put a hat on that bald head!</p>
Colorectal	<p>Cancer that starts in your rectum or colon. Risk factors include being overweight or obese, physical inactivity, a diet high in red and processed meats, smoking, heavy alcohol use, being older, and a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or polyps.</p> <p>Make sure you get a regular colonoscopy screening to check for polyps and precancerous tissue changes. After the age of 45, men should be getting a regular colonoscopy test. Talk to your doctor about how frequently you should be tested.</p> <p>Are you getting the recommended 38-40 grams of fiber a day for colon health?</p>
Prostate	<p>Most commonly found in men over 65. Talk to your doctor about a PSA screening and a digital rectal exam.</p> <p>Is your "diet" prostate friendly? Not just by chance, but the foods recommended to eat for prostate health are also the same for a healthy heart: reduce processed foods and meats, limit dairy and saturated fats, 5-7 servings of fruit and veggies a day, limit sugar and sodium, and whole grains instead of white, refined flour.</p>
Lung	<p>Most commonly found in smokers, but chemical exposure in the air can also be a contributor. If you smoke, stop and don't start if you don't smoke.</p>

**Secondary issues affecting men over 50. Your physician will cover the medical options for each condition. Below I will address lifestyle and supplements that may help. However, please discuss any supplements with your physician first.**

<p>Erectile Dysfunction-ED</p> <p>Affects almost 50% of men between the age of 40-70</p>	<p>ED and low sexual drive has been associated with heart disease. So focus on a “heart healthy” lifestyle. The blood vessels in the penis are similar to those in the heart. The better the blood flow, the better the erection. Lifestyle changes to help include reducing excessive weight, better nutrition (heart healthy) and regular exercise.</p> <p>Supplements: The research doesn’t strongly support the use of supplements of ED. However, there is some benefit noted with L-arginine and yohimbine hydrochloride for mild to moderate ED</p> <p>L-arginine and Pycnogenol A study has shown that the combination of L-arginine and Pycnogenol supplements helped a significant number of men ages 25 to 45 with ED achieve normal erections</p>
<p>Vision &amp; Hearing changes</p>	<p>Presbyopia: As we age, the lens of our eye stiffens and lose its ability to change shape in order to focus on nearby objects</p> <p>Cataracts: The clouding of normally clear lens in the eye as fibers in the lens compress and proteins clump together. Risk factors include obesity, diabetes, prednisone, alcohol consumption, and smoking. Surgical treatments of cataracts are usually very successful.</p> <p>Hearing loss- starts gradually and men are 5 times more likely to have hearing loss as compared to women. Lifestyle contributors include heart disease, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease.</p> <p>Even mild hearing loss increases your risk of dementia.</p>
<p>Lower back pain</p>	<p>Many factors include osteoarthritis, core weakness, obesity, and a lack of exercise are all contributors. The most important muscle you can strengthen is the multifidus.</p>
<p>Osteoarthritis- OA</p>	<p>Lifestyle factors that can affect OA include obesity, poor nutrition, and a lack of regular exercise. If you haven’t checked out our 5 Pillars of Fitness course, now is a great time.</p> <p>We need to find lower impact, joint friendly exercises like swimming, biking, Tai Chi, and Yoga</p>

	<p>It's important to stress "consistency over Intensity" with our exercise program. That means you will exercise daily, just doing your best in the moment. Unless you are sick, don't take days off. Try to exercise daily, track your steps (goal of &gt;5-7 thousand per day)</p>
<p>Low Testosterone</p>	<p>The male hormone testosterone starts to fall between 1-2 % a year after the age of 40. Testosterone is primarily responsible for regulating sex drive (libido), bone mass, fat distribution, muscle mass and strength, and the production of red blood cells and sperm.</p> <p>Therefore, low levels of testosterone may lead to lower sex drive, less muscle mass, increased fat gains, and lower bone density.</p> <p>Lifestyle factors that contribute to low T include being overweight, heart disease, low levels of fitness, diabetes, and thyroid issues. Is supplementing testosterone the answer? This is a discussion that needs to happen with your doctor. However, be aware of the potential risks of testosterone supplementation. It is not recommended if you have had prostate cancer, elevated PSA levels, an enlarged prostate, nodules on your prostate, sleep apnea, or pre-existing heart condition.</p> <p>If you do start supplementing testosterone, your body will often produce less T on it's own, making stopping difficult.</p> <p>Bottom line: get your lifestyle and health in check first, then see how you feel.</p>
<p>Low energy</p>	<p>Could be an underlying medical issue. Another reason to have a full physical exam with your doctor. Other factors that play a role include depression, poor sleep, poor nutrition, anemia, and thyroid issues.</p> <p>Lifestyle changes to help boost energy levels include exercise, better eating habits, and improving the quality of your sleep.</p>
<p>Depression, Stress, &amp; Anxiety</p>	<p>Depression is less prevalent among older adults than among younger adults but can have serious consequences. Men are 4 times more likely to commit suicide than women.</p> <p>Lifestyle changes to help with depression and stress include having a regular <a href="#">exercise program</a>, active social engagements, and establishing a <a href="#">Meditation practice</a></p>
<p>Brain Health &amp; Memory</p>	<p>Cardiorespiratory fitness and strength training are both highly linked to improved cognition and memory. Remember, anything</p>

	<p>that is good for your body (nutrition, exercise, sports, etc) is also good for your brain.</p> <p>We need to decrease stress levels, focus on an eating plan high in fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains (easy on meats, processed foods, and low in saturated fats).</p> <p>Become a “lifelong learner” . Learn an instrument, foreign language, a new skill, or take a class. Our brain is like a muscle that needs to be flexed, we either “use it or lose it”</p>
<p>Sexual &amp; Urinary changes</p>	<p>As a man ages, his prostate enlarges. When it’s not due to cancer, it’s called Benign Prostate Hyperplasia -BPH.</p> <p>An enlarged prostate can press against the urethra (the tube that carries urine out the body) and block the flow of urine. This causes the bladder wall to become irritable. The bladder begins to contract even when it contains small amounts of urine, causing more frequent urination.</p> <p>Lifestyle changes that may help include avoiding fluids and alcohol in the evenings, take the time to completely empty your bladder.</p>
<p>Kidney Stones</p>	<p>Kidneys regulate fluid and electrolytes and work as filters. A kidney stone is a hard, crystalized rock that forms in the kidney , developed from calcium. If you do have kidney stones, you are at risk for more.</p> <p>Lifestyle factors include associations with Type 2 diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), diet high in sodium and sugar, obesity, and some medications that have added calcium.</p> <p>Drinking more water is the best way to prevent kidney stones.If you don’t drink enough, your urine output will be low. Low urine output means your urine is more concentrated and less likely to dissolve urine salts that cause stones.</p> <p>You can tell whether you’re hydrated by looking at the color of your urine — it should be clear or pale yellow. If it’s dark, you need to drink more.</p>

**Establish your Health Care All-Star Team:**

Imagine you are the General Manager of your favorite sports team. You would want the best players at each position to help you be successful. The same goes for your Medical Team. Let's meet the players:

1. Primary Care Physician: Make sure you are comfortable talking to them about ALL things health and that they take the time to listen. They can and should be willing to make referrals to specialists and perform routine annual exams.
2. Cardiologist: Don't wait until you are in crisis to find a good cardiologist. If you are at risk OR have a family history of heart disease, now is the time to act. Risk factors include diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and high cholesterol.
3. Urologist: Keeps tabs on your prostate and all related changes. African Americans have a greater risk of prostate and colon issues and should be established with specialists sooner.
4. Optometrist and Ophthalmologists: Optometrists are not medical doctors but they can prescribe and help you with corrective glasses or contacts. Ophthalmologists: medical doctors that can help with other vision related changes or medical issues. For example, a retinal exam can help to detect other diseases. Hypertension can cause blood vessels in your retina to narrow. Diabetes can present as small areas of bleeding in your retina and high HDL's often produce a white arc around your cornea.
5. Dentist: Do your gums bleed with flossing or brushing? Could be a sign of gum disease. Good dental care is not just for cavities. Research has identified a strong connection between oral health and chronic diseases such as Alzheimers and diabetes. Keep flossing and see your dentist regularly.
6. Physical Therapist: We can help keep you strong, flexible, and exercising for life! PT's can help with rehab after surgeries, teach you how to care for yourself, and use hands-on techniques to reduce muscle and joint pain. [Check out our website to learn more](http://www.integrativephysicaltherapyservices.com) www.integrativephysicaltherapyservices.com
7. Pharmacist: Helps to insure you are taking the correct medications in the best possible way, helps with drug interactions/side effects, and can sometimes perform routine health tests.
8. Massage Therapists: Who doesn't like a good, stress relieving massage? Massage therapists can also be a big part of reducing muscle pain and tightness.

**Time for Action: When was your last Physical with your Physician?**



## Recommended Screening and Physical Schedules:

1. Basic Physical: 1 time per year- on your Birthday to help remember
2. Blood Test: every year, part of your physical
3. Blood pressure check: Weekly at home, develop a baseline
4. EKG: Electrocardiogram: measures the electrical activity of your heart, establishes a baseline and can check for abnormalities
5. Manual prostate exam: looks for lumps or nodules
6. Colonoscopy: checks for polyps and colon cancer
7. Vitamin D levels
8. C-reactive Proteins for levels of inflammation

## **What can you do at home?**

Even if you do go to your physician for regular check ups, at home Health monitoring is a must.

1. Blood pressure and Heart rate: For example, if you track your blood pressure and heart rate at home, you would be able to notice any changes as you collect more data points. This could be very helpful in determining if any additional medical intervention may be needed if you start to notice subtle changes. Remember your target is to have Blood pressure at less than 120 over 80 and a resting heart rate of 60-100 on the high end (lower the better)
2. Gut check: You will need a measuring tape for this one. Measure your relaxed belly at the level of your belly button. Your waist should be less than half of your height. For example if you are 6' tall (72 inches) then your waist measurement should be less than 36 inches. If it's not, then you have excessive abdominal fat and you need to jump in to action quickly. The abdominal or visceral fat is a source of inflammation and is strongly correlated with heart disease.
3. Getting up off the floor: How hard is it to get up and down from the floor? You should be able to floor transfer without needing to hold on to anything and minimal use of your hands. If you haven't completed the [Journey to Health, now is a great time!](#)
4. Are you spitting pink? Do your gums bleed when you brush? If so, get yourself to your dentist pronto and start brushing and flossing 2 times per day. Our gum health is an indicator of our overall health. Bleeding gums can also be a sign of chronic inflammation and cardiac disease.
5. Blood glucose and cholesterol home testing: If you are at risk for heart disease and have high cholesterol, you may want to monitor at home. Talk to your doctor if more frequent checks at home are needed.

## **10 Action Steps to a Longer and Healthier Life**

1. **Continue or start exercising daily:** Use the [5 Pillars of Health course](#) to get started or refine your program.
2. **Establish a Healthy Eating Lifestyle:** Avoid processed foods, limit your meat and dairy, limit your saturated fat intake, and reduce salt and sugar consumption. Too many times the only question someone asks about eating a certain way is “will I lose weight”? The questions you need to be asking yourself regarding your diet are:

1. Is it sustainable for the long term? Avoid the “hot diet” of the season
2. Is it “heart friendly”? Remember, the #1 cause of death for both men and women is heart disease. The Mediterranean Diet and the D.A.S.H.( Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension) diets both have strong support in the literature in helping to reduce your chance of heart disease.
3. Is it nutritionally complete? Will I be getting the minimal amounts of fruits, vegetables, and fiber I need to be healthy?
4. Will it help me control my weight? Remember, 2/3rds of us need to lose weight.
5. Is it a safe diet for the long term?
6. Will it help me live longer?

3. **Keep close tabs on your cholesterol**
4. **Blood pressure checks at home:** Goal is less than 120 over 80
5. **Quality sleep of over 7.5 hours a night:** High quality, restorative sleep of over 7.5 hours a night is critical for longevity. During sleep tissue repair occurs, memories are consolidated, metabolism is improved, appetite is suppressed, and tissues release growth hormone. **5 tips for better sleep at night:**

1. Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time everyday, even on the weekends. This will help to improve your natural Circadian rhythms.
2. The bed is only for “adult activities” and sleep. Not for reading, watching TV, etc. This helps to program our brain to associate your bed with sleeping only.
3. Keep the room as dark as you can. This include light from clocks, charging phones, etc. The light emitted from electronics or from the outside can effect the release of our sleep hormone, melatonin. Try wearing an eye mask to keep light from entering your eyes.
4. Stay cool. Keep your bedroom around 65 degrees fahrenheit if possible.
5. Spend about 15 minutes outside within the first 1-2 hours of sunrise. The early morning low angle solar rays helps to modulate melatonin release about 14-16 hours later making you naturally sleepy.

6. **Watch your weight:** Keep your weight and waist line under control. Daily weighing of yourself has been shown in multiple studies to be part of an effective weight management strategie. We need to measure what we would like to manage.

7. Reduce overall levels of stress and anxiety. Try to develop a short, but daily [Meditation practice](#).
8. **Routine Medical exams with your physician.**
9. **Avoid tobacco in any form.**
10. **If you choose to drink, limit yourself to 1 drink per day**

**Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the course. Hope you learned as much as I did!**

**Best**

**Ed**