

Men's Health



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The Top Seven Recurring Men's Health Issues

When it comes to the differences between women's and men's health issues, men are more likely to smoke in excess, overuse alcohol, partake in riskier behaviour and make unhealthier lifestyle decisions than women. Although women would see their loved ones at the doctor's before they would tend to their own medical issues, many men would prefer not to face the realities of the truth or not to know about potential health concerns.

Furthermore, cultural, traditional, and religious beliefs, along with the

stereotypes involving "being a man" and their "invincibility" are among the many reasons why some men tend to avoid visiting their doctors more than their female counterparts.

These reasons and many others have contributed to recurring men's health issues in 2022. Intercare reflects on 2022 and would like to offer insight into some of the conditions regularly affecting men to inspire positive lifestyle adjustments in 2023.

Recurring Men's Health Issues Observed in 2022

A basic exercise regime, responsible lifestyle, healthy diet and positive spirit will go a long way in preventing men's health issues and offering a happier and longer life. Although not all of them are preventable, most are treatable, and we would like to encourage you to look beyond the common misconceptions and attend regular check-ups and screenings to encourage early detection and treatment.

Cardiovascular Diseases

Although 2022 saw a marked increase in heart-related diseases in women, men are still twice as likely to develop one of these conditions in their lifetime. This year, we saw the occurrence of several incidents in men such as strokes, cardiac arrests (or heart attacks) and developmental angina. Poor lifestyle and dietary decisions, irregular blood pressure and high cholesterol levels have been a few of the major contributors to these conditions.

Respiratory Disorders

There are three times more male smokers than females in South Africa today. Despite recent awareness campaigns, 40% of South Africans still light up. Statistically, this means that we have observed far more men developing Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, (COPD) lung cancer and other respiratory-related infections. Many of these conditions are preventable and curable with early detection. However, your health will improve drastically in 2023 when you commit to quitting the habit altogether.



Kidney and Liver Diseases

Studies have shown that men will abuse alcohol, drink heavily or binge drink almost three times as much as women. Turning to alcohol for celebration, commiseration or anything in between has long been customary for many South Africans and has subsequently increased the risk of related afflictions. Last year, the habitual use of the liquid resulted in many men suffering from kidney and liver diseases such as cirrhosis of the liver, kidney and renal failure and even cancer.

Diabetes

These afflictions are caused when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, resulting in too much sugar content in the bloodstream. Symptoms include being thirstier than usual, frequent urination, unscheduled weight loss, constantly feeling weak or tired, blurred vision and more. Type 2 Diabetes has been more prevalent in men than women this year. However, if left untreated, both Types 1 and 2 may lead to heart disease, severe tooth decay and gum disease, nerve damage, eye and kidney damage, erectile dysfunction and much more.

Addictions

It is said that every man has an addiction, albeit work, sport, food, nicotine, caffeine or others. Some addictions, however, are more harmful than others. Drugs (illegal, prescription or over-the-counter) and alcohol are proving to be the most destructive. These affect some South African males without prejudice across all age groups, but addictions have significantly increased among the youth. Eighty per cent of male youth deaths were alcohol-related and drug consumption was reported to be twice the international norm.

If you or anyone you know may be struggling with an addiction of any form, know that it is treatable and curable. Reach out and ask for assistance from your nearest medical professional, health provider or relevant non-profit organisation.

Cancer

Many of the afflictions affecting men's health that we have observed through 2022, including those mentioned above, could have been prevented through better lifestyle choices and more informed decision-making. In some instances, abuse, excess and hard recreation have led to conditions of cancer in varying forms. Although some variations of cancer are hereditary and passed on genetically, in many cases they are treatable and potentially preventable with a combination of exercise, a healthy diet and moderating, if not eliminating, bad habits.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Syphilis and gonorrhoea are still prevalent among South African men. However, they have very distinctive external signs, making them easily identifiable. HIV/AIDS, on the other hand, is difficult to self-diagnose without testing due to confusing symptoms. The urgency of the pandemic may have suppressed statistics to an extent, but due to various socio-economic and other reasons, more than 8.5 million individuals are living with the disease in 2022.

It is important from an educational perspective to be aware that HIV/AIDS is still a major concern in South Africa. Prevention of most STDs is abstinence, proper protection and other safe sex practices. Until there is full disclosure between partners and relevant testing, it is advised to always use a condom during intimate sexual contact.

These are just some of the recurring men's health issues we have observed in 2022. Remember, regular check-ups with a medical professional or paying them a visit following an injury or when niggling irritations recur regularly is not a sign of weakness or a source of embarrassment.

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Our professionals may agree that life will happen, victories will be celebrated, and losses will be commiserated. However, they might also agree that prevention is better than cure. Make 2023 the year that you commit to adopting a healthy lifestyle. Introduce yourself to your local Intercare Medical and Dental Centre and make the year a victory for you!

Source: Intercare - Men's Health Issues | Healthy Lifestyles for Men in 2023 - Accessed 5 June 2023

9 Things Men Need to Get Checked

You don't need statistics to tell you that men are more likely to avoid the doctor than women. Women are, in fact, 100 percent more likely to see a doctor for examinations, screenings, and preventive health consults, even though they're far less likely to die from one of the top 10 causes of death.

Every Year:

1. Blood Sugar Check

"Yearly checks for glucose levels are imperative for men to decrease their likelihood of significant cardiac disease," says Schlachter. Diabetes, a chronic disease characterized by high blood sugars, greatly increases your risk of heart disease and other complications such as kidney damage and erectile dysfunction due to nerve damage. Annual glucose testing serves as the best method of diagnosing diabetes before it gets too advanced.

"Many men with the beginnings of diabetes and/or a diagnosis of diabetes can be managed appropriately with diet and exercise," Schlachter adds. "If lifestyle management with diet and exercise is not sufficient, there are oral medicines and/or insulin that can be used."

2. Skin Check

Men with a family history of skin cancer, or who had significant sunburns when they were younger, are at high risk for skin cancer. Schlachter says skin cancer can affect men of any age.

"It is very important to get yearly skin checks by a dermatologist. At home, men should keep a close eye on their moles and birthmarks, as slight changes can signify concerning etiology," she said. "Consistent use of sunscreen is paramount."

3. PSA Test

One in seven men will develop prostate cancer. Other than skin cancer, it is the most common form of cancer in American men. The prostate-specific antigen, or PSA blood level test, along with digital rectal exams (DREs), are the best way to detect prostate cancer.

"All men 50 to the age of 70 should be checked on a yearly basis," she said. "If a man has a family history of prostate cancer or an unknown history, PSA testing should begin at the age of 40."

Every 3 Years:

4. Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is a rite of passage for men (and women) over the age of 50, as that's when colon cancer risk increases. Other risk factors include a medical history of inflammatory bowel disease or a diet high in animal fat.

"If a man has no family history of colon cancer, a screening colonoscopy should be done at the age of 50. Future colonoscopies are done every three to 10 years, based on the results of each colonoscopy," Schlachter says.

Every 4 Years:

5. Blood Pressure and Cholesterol Check

High blood pressure is the number one cause of stroke in men, and it is very serious if left unmanaged. High cholesterol can also lead to serious cardiovascular problems, like heart attack or stroke. "Get a thorough exam with basic blood work," says Schlachter. "Many local pharmacies are able to check your blood pressure with no appointment needed."

Men 20 and over should have their cholesterol checked every three to five years, and then yearly after the age of 50.



Every Chance You Get:

6. Echocardiogram

Many deadly cardiac risk factors are caught with simple cholesterol testing and blood pressure monitoring, as well as weight management.

But if there is a family history of cardiac disease, or if you already have known elevated cholesterol or high blood pressure, echocardiograms or cardiac stress tests can ensure that there is not significant heart damage, says Schlachter.

7. Liver Enzyme Test

Liver enzyme testing is part of standard blood work and looks for any damage to the liver that can come from various sources, including alcohol — men, after all, drink more alcohol than women, on average.

"It is important for men to have these enzymes checked, as they can run high due to over-the-counter medicines, alcohol consumption, inflammatory disorders, thyroid disorders, obesity, and some toxicities," Schlachter says.

8. TSH Test

Your thyroid helps every cell in your body by releasing hormones that regulate metabolism. Any changes in the hormones it produces can impact a man's life, and cause weight gain, lethargy, exhaustion, or fatigue. A blood test called a thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) test can be done by your doctor to check your thyroid's function.

"Many of the symptoms of an underactive or overactive thyroid unfortunately are symptoms that many men feel are 'part of life,'" Schlachter says. But if testing shows abnormalities, they can usually be fixed through medication.

9. Lung Screenings

Lung cancer is the most preventable of all cancers. Ninety percent of the time, it is found in people who smoke. The rest are typically people with a genetic predisposition to developing it or people who've been exposed to second hand smoke or caustic chemicals.

Prevention is key, says Schlachter: "Lung cancer is often an incidental finding on scans that are done for an alternate reason. Screening for lung cancer is controversial, as the well-accepted forms of scanning are high in radiation," she said. "Lung cancer experts are looking at lower-dose CAT scans, which may be the future of lung cancer screening." An annual chest X-ray is not recommended as a screening tool.

Source: 9 Things Men Need to Get Checked - Urology Hospital - Accessed 7 June 2023

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