

MEN'S HEALTH ISSUE

Why A Men's Health issue? There are many reasons why there should be a focus on the health of men in our community. From the **15th to the 21st of June**, it is **MEN'S HEALTH WEEK**. This is led by the Men's Health Forum with the purpose to raise awareness of preventable health issues and to encourage **MEN** and **BOYS** to seek professional help for health-related issues.

The Labour Government's first Men's Health Strategy (November 2025) addresses several key concerns: rising male mental ill health, preventable conditions like heart disease and prostate cancer being diagnosed too late, and suicide remaining the leading cause of death in men under 50. It also highlights how boys, especially those from disadvantaged communities, are being negatively influenced by harmful figures promoting conflicting messages about masculinity.

We know that:

- Compared to women, men in the UK experience significantly poorer health and shorter lives.
- Over a third of men die before age 75, and their average life expectancy is nearly four years lower than women's.
- Healthy life expectancy for men is only 61.5 years and has fallen over the past decade, meaning many spend more than a fifth of their lives in poor health.
- Men are also more likely than women to die in young adulthood.

Some challenges to men's health:

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD)
- Mental health
- Cancer, particularly prostate and lung
- Respiratory disease
- Liver disease

Actions that may help:

CVD risk factors include smoking, high blood pressure, excess weight, and alcohol. Checking these is straightforward.

You can use the Health POD in the surgery reception area. Remove your shoes, step on the machine, and follow the instructions. The data generated is printed on a slip you can take from the machine. It also goes straight to your medical record.

If the POD is not your thing, then make an appointment with the nurse to check out your data and get advice if you need to act.

Mental Health is an issue for us all. When we are feeling low it impacts on our physical health, relationships, work and leisure time. That link between mental, physical, and social health is crucial for our quality of life. Many men and boys struggle with the issue of masculinity and the expectations it places on them.

In our community there are some organisations that can support our mental wellbeing.

Breathing Space provides a place to explore and improve overall health and well-being. There are two groups for men, a group outdoors and a more indoors based group, with activities led by the members. Check it out at www.breathingspace.co.uk

Men's Shed is a national organisation with Sheds across County Durham.

Check out:

RecycLD&Shabby Chic Shed on Plawsworth Rd Sacriston. This Shed offers upcycling and furniture restoration. www.menssheds.org.uk

MOT (Men Out Together) at Bullion Hall in Chester le Street. www.themensshed.co.uk

You can also find mental health support at www.durham.gov.uk/article/32514/Community-mental-health-support

As well as the mental and social aspects of our health, men should be aware of their physical health.

Weight – first of all know your Body Mass Index (BMI) You can check it at www.nhs.uk/health-assessment-tools/calculate-your-body-mass-index/

Then consider the following:

- Get active. Walk, run, cycle, anything that raises your heart rate. Aim for 30 mins each day if you can
- Get your 5 A Day – 80g of fresh, canned or frozen fruit or vegetables is 1 portion
- If you would benefit from losing weight then aim low, 1 to 2lbs or 0.5 to 1Kg a week.
- Read food labels, the greener the label the healthier it is
- Swap sugary drinks for water or zero sugar versions.
- Cut down on food high in sugar or fat

Cancer is one of the most common causes of death in men in England, with around 40% of it preventable if risk factors can be eliminated. Prostate cancer is the common cancer in men whilst lung cancer is the most common cause of early death.

Respiratory and Liver disease are major causes of early death in men. Smokers and former industrial workers are most at risk.

Getting Healthy Staying Healthy

Making the changes in the way you live can be hard even though you know they are for the better. How many people do you know who join a gym in January as their New Year Resolution and have given up by February?

The longer you do things in a certain way the more deeply those habits are just part of us. Changing them requires conscious effort every time. Will-power is a limited resource called upon many times each day. Sometimes your capacity to override old habits is low even though you know it is the best action for your health.

Unhealthy choices can feel good, comfort food, skipping exercise, staying up late. The benefits

of healthy living, more energy, weight loss, lower risk of disease, take weeks to appear.

Making The Change

Small gradual changes work better than dramatic gestures. Here are some small changes you can make immediately:

Getting Around

- Walk or cycle, don't drive short distances
- Get off the bus a stop early
- Take the stairs instead of the lift

At Work

- Walk during phone calls
- Stand or pace during meetings
- Walk to a colleague instead of mailing

At Home

- Do squats or calf raises as the kettle boils
- Stretch while watching TV
- Walk during ad breaks

Small Things

- Walk to the shops instead of driving
- Carry shopping bags instead of a trolley
- Park further away deliberately
- Do housework at a brisker pace
- Take the longer route to anywhere

This approach does not require the extra time of the gym. You are doing what you normally do, just differently. These all add up.

More Ambitious Activities.

- Couch to 5k www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/get-running-with-couch-to-5k
- Power walking www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/walking-for-health/
- Join a gym. There are many local authority facilities across the area. Check them out at www.thriveleisure.co.uk

If you have not exercised for a while, check with the GP or the Nurse before you begin.

Just one thing - take an exercise snack. Squeezing short bursts of activity into your week can help improve blood glucose and blood pressure more effectively than one 30-minute session. Your metabolism stays raised for a time after each short snack.