



November 15, 2023

Men's Health – Aging and Well-being

It is time to turn our attention to the health of men: our male members and male family members.

As men age, they need to pay more attention to their health, notice and address health warning signs, and regularly attend applicable screenings and annual physicals.

While you will read about some serious issues in men's health below, be assured that there are many positive paths to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. We encourage our members to be proactive with their own health: you will find valuable tips in each section of this column, along with resources from Canadian health authorities.

Heart Disease and High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

Tips: Monitor your blood pressure and see your physician for a physical and blood screening. Keep high blood pressure and cholesterol under control, exercise regularly, eat right, and – if you smoke – make every effort to quit.

For men, heart disease is an important health issue to keep on the radar, as one in five men dies from heart disease before the age of 75. This disease claims more men's lives than any other disease. Men are also more likely to have heart attacks earlier in life.

Men are at increased risk of heart disease if they have a family history. Other risk factors include:

- smoking

- unhealthy diets with too much fat, particularly saturated fat
- lack of exercise
- being overweight
- excess stress

Increased blood pressure is also a major risk for men as they age. Men who do not address their high blood pressure over time put themselves at a higher risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Cancers

Tips: By age 50, men should be regularly screened for cancers, particularly colon and prostate cancer. The PSA test (Prostate Specific Antigen) measures the level of PSA in your blood. Raised PSA can be an early indication of prostate cancer. Diets high in dairy and animal fats may increase risk; those high in green vegetables may be protective.

Colorectal cancer: Men have approximately a one in 22 chance of developing colorectal cancer, a slightly higher chance than women. Risk factors include being overweight, not getting enough exercise, smoking, heavy alcohol use, and diets high in red or processed meats. Screening is critical, as early identification has a significant impact on survival rates.

Liver cancer: Instances of liver cancer have been on the rise for the past several decades, and this cancer is three times more common in men than women. Risk factors include chronic heavy alcohol use, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. Men may experience symptoms such as sudden weight loss, a distended abdomen, nausea, vomiting, and yellowing of the skin and eyes.

Bladder cancer: Bladder cancer affects the inner lining of the bladder and is the fourth most common cancer in men, especially in men over 50. Smokers are more at risk. Symptoms include pain during urination, blood in the urine, and a frequent need to urinate.

Prostate cancer: Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in Canadian men and is most common in older men. It is more common in Black men (including men of African and Caribbean ancestry) than in white men, and less common in Asian men. Trans women and non-binary people who were assigned male at birth (AMAB) can also get prostate cancer.

In younger men, the prostate is about the size of a walnut, and may grow larger in older men. Prostate cancer usually grows slowly and can often be completely removed or successfully managed when it is diagnosed before it has spread outside of the prostate.

[Click here](#) to learn more symptoms of prostate cancer.

Below the Belt Health

Tip: *Talk to your doctor about any issues with urination or any signs of irritation or pain.*

Incontinence: The loss of ability to control urination is a common problem that can be easily cured, or at least made manageable.

Impotence/erectile dysfunction: [A cross-sectional study](#) of 3,921 Canadian men, age 40 to 88, found the overall prevalence of erectile dysfunction (ED) was 49.4%.

Anything that interferes with the blood flow to the penis may be a cause. Diabetes, kidney disease, chronic alcoholism, multiple sclerosis, and cardiovascular disease account for many cases.

Infertility: Men over 40 have a lower chance of becoming fathers due to lower sperm production. Their sperm are not as healthy and have decreased mobility. It takes longer for couples to conceive if the man is over age 40, and the risk of miscarriage is higher if the man is older than 45.

Hormone Changes

Tip: *Getting plenty of exercise, and regularly getting eight hours of sleep a night, can improve the symptoms of low testosterone.*

Testosterone levels begin to drop steadily every year after a man hits 30. The decline is slow – about 1% per year – so men may not begin feeling the effects until their 40s. Signs of low testosterone include emotional changes, increased body fat, reduced muscle mass, and changes in sleeping habits.

Physical and Emotional Health Problems

Tips: *Keep your brain sharp with mental exercises, social activities, music, spending time with friends, and keeping pets. If depression is an issue, seek psychological counselling.*

Be conscious of your quality of sleep. [Check out this article from *The Learning Brain*](#) series for tips for better sleep.

Discuss weight loss and gain with your physician. It is always a good idea to revisit your diet: the diet you enjoyed in your 20s and 30s might no longer work at 50!

When men reach their late 40s or early 50s, other health problems may occur, including:

- hot flushes
- mood swings
- dry and thin skin
- increased sweating
- tiredness
- poor concentration
- loss of muscle mass and fat redistribution

These symptoms can impact quality of life, and it is important to meet with a physician to narrow down the underlying cause in an effort to resolve these conditions. Causes of these symptoms can include:

- anaemia
- thyroid-gland dysfunction
- depression
- marital problems
- job dissatisfaction
- financial problems

- alcohol misuse
- metabolic changes

Staying Healthy

Aging in a healthy way is not an automatic process – it needs to be done with intent. Let's face it: you want to feel well and able to effectively perform your job, *and* you want to enjoy your retirement years from a place of well-being.

Repeatedly, the articles sourced for this column focused on the following tips for men to staying healthy:

- Enjoy a healthy diet and weight
- Stay active
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption
- Do not smoke
- Get enough sleep
- See your physician regularly and get important screening
- Manage your stress
- Have a strong support system

[Here is a two-page PDF](#) with tips on staying healthy over 40!

The following Canadian resources include excellent information on health conditions, symptoms, and tips for staying healthy:

- 1) [HealthlinkBC](#)

This is a great source of local information, including links and FAQs with direction to key information, and checklists. For example, you will find this question/link on the site:

- [Prostate Cancer Screening: Should I Have a PSA Test?](#)

- 2) Just for you – Men:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/just-for-you/men.html>

3) Canadian Men's Health Foundation

<https://menshealthfoundation.ca/mens-health-conditions/>

Sources:

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/men-5-secrets-to-feeling-great-as-you-age/>

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/older-mens-health>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.