

THE ART OF KNOWING YOUR MAN



What Women Need to Know About Men's Health

It's no old wives' tale: Women really do tend to be the healthcare gatekeepers for the men in their lives.

A study from the University of Chicago, for example, found that older married men were 20 percent more likely to have gotten a colonoscopy to screen for colon cancer in the past five years, compared with men who were single. The percentage went up to 40 percent if the men were happily married and their wives had high levels of education. The researchers concluded that women's health decisions influence their partners, especially if a man views his spouse as supportive.

In other words, nagging—in a nice way—can be healthy.

What you can do to help the men you care about take good care of themselves? Try some of these conversation starters the next time there's a lull in your daily chitchat.



“When is the last time you had a checkup?”

Once men hit age 18 and stop having yearly checkups at the pediatrician, many don't see a doctor again until their 50s. That's when prostate problems may start to become an issue, or when they are more likely to have a health crisis, such as a heart attack. This is a big missed opportunity for preventive care.

Even if your man feels fine, he should see his healthcare practitioner regularly. Checkups can catch problems he's having even before symptoms show up, such as diabetes or pre-diabetes (when blood sugar is high but not high enough to be diabetes).

For example, more than 30 million Americans have diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but 1 in 4 of them don't know about it because they haven't been tested (a fasting blood test at the doctor's office can detect diabetes). Because men tend to have less contact with the medical system, they're especially at risk.

The good news is that if you catch and treat diabetes earlier, it's easier to control, and an early diagnosis can also reduce the risk of common diabetes complications, such as blindness.

“Let's check out your risk for heart attack”

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of both men and women in the United States, and 1 of every 4 deaths is heart disease related. To help your favorite man reduce his risk, suggest that he calculate his 10-year risk of heart disease or stroke with the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Heart Risk Calculator at <http://www.cvriskcalculator.com>. He can plug in his total and LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and blood pressure numbers among other data, such as his weight.

Getting your guy to know their risk score can be a powerful motivator. If his risk of having a cardiovascular event is at least 20 percent, he's in the high-risk category. Encourage him to do what he can to reduce his risk. Use the calculator to see how his risk percentage changes if he quits smoking, for example, or loses 10 pounds.

“Maybe you should see a urologist”

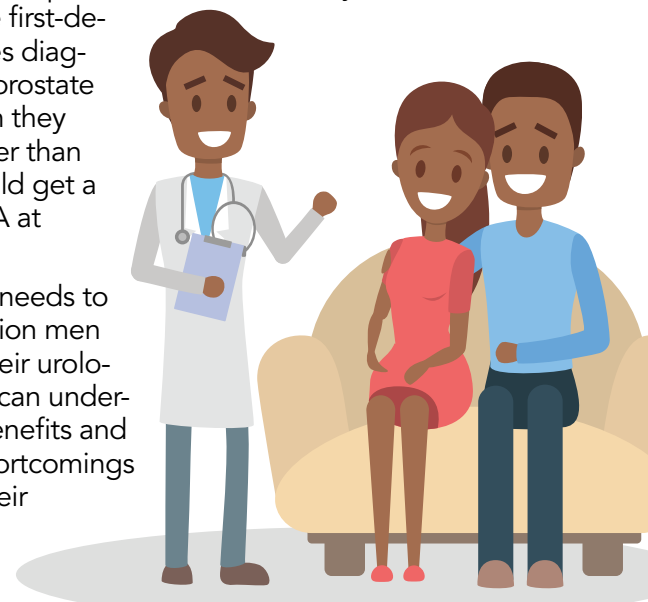
Like gynecologists for women, urologists are part of a man's comprehensive strategy for health maintenance and prevention. Urologists treat everything from urinary tract infections and male factor infertility to erectile dysfunction and hormonal imbalances, as well as prostate cancer.

If the man in question is older than 40, urge him to see a urologist to get his prostate checked, particularly if he's at increased risk for prostate cancer, which will affect about 1 in 7 U.S. men during their lifetimes. The American Urologic Association doesn't recommend routine prostate specific antigen (PSA) screening—a blood test that can help determine a man's risk of developing

prostate cancer—for men younger than 54. But a man between ages 55 and 69 should discuss the benefits and limitations of PSA testing with his doctor and consider screening, because a PSA check can be lifesaving, especially if prostate cancer runs in the family.

It is recommended that all men between ages 55 and 69 consider a PSA screening. A baseline PSA test at age 45 is recommended for men with at least one first-degree relative, such as a brother or father, who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Similarly, a man with one or more first-degree relatives diagnosed with prostate cancer when they were younger than age 65 should get a baseline PSA at age 40.

PSA testing needs to be a discussion men have with their urologist so they can understand the benefits and potential shortcomings based on their situation.



KNOW HIS NUMBERS

Certain health numbers are important to track so the men in your life can monitor their health from year to year and stay motivated to take care of themselves by, for example, eating a plant-based diet, losing weight if they need to, and exercising regularly.

Here's a checkup checklist to make sure he—and you—get the information that will help both of you monitor his health status.

BLOOD CHOLESTEROL. To get accurate blood cholesterol results—LDL (“bad” cholesterol), HDL (“good” cholesterol), triglycerides and total cholesterol—he will need to fast, typically for nine to 12 hours before the cholesterol test. That means no eating and drinking, other than water, after midnight for a morning test. The target numbers to aim for are under 200 for total cholesterol, under 100 for LDL, over 60 for HDL, and under 150 for triglycerides.

BLOOD PRESSURE: 120/80 is considered normal.

FASTING BLOOD GLUCOSE: This number should be 70 to 99. If he has been diagnosed with diabetes, his HbA1c (average blood sugar over two to three months) should be less than 7 percent.

WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE. For men, smaller than 40 inches is optimal.

BODY MASS INDEX (BMI): 18.6 to 24.9 is ideal.