

Men's health --- when and what to check

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All men should have regular health checks, even if you feel completely well. It is your responsibility and your health ultimately affects everyone in your family (your parents, your wife and your children).

Men tend not to seek medical help as often and as early as women. This can result in late diagnosis of diseases.

Health screenings can detect diseases early and they can be treated early to avoid complications, and even death. Significant health risks include hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol levels, heart disease and cancers. Health conditions that only affect men include, prostate enlargement/cancer, erectile dysfunction and low testosterone levels.

Hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol are risk factors for developing heart disease and stroke. You should have your blood pressure checked every 1-2 years, especially if there is a family history. Diabetes can also lead to kidney failure. Screening for diabetes should start at age 40, or earlier if one of your parents or siblings is diabetic. Obesity (BMI>30) also puts you at risk of diabetes. Cholesterol levels should be checked regularly from age 35, or earlier if you are a smoker or/and have a family history of heart disease.

Prostate cancer tends to develop in men over the age of fifty. Globally it is the sixth leading cause of cancer-related death in men. It is now the first in the UK and second in the United States. Men should be screened at 50 years old if there is no family history of prostate cancer. And earlier at 40 years old if there is a family history.

Low testosterone levels can affect your energy levels, sex drive, physical features and mood. It can also cause erectile dysfunction and osteoporosis. Low levels can be caused by certain diseases, but more commonly by old age. Men above age 45 should have their testosterone levels checked. Low levels can be treated with hormone replacement therapy.

A multitude of illnesses/conditions can have no signs or symptoms for many years, with harmful consequences. A comprehensive health screening can uncover these conditions and potentially save your life.