

Man Up: Take Care of Your Health for Yourself and Those You Love



For decades, American men have carved their path against a societal landscape that encouraged them to be strong, silent, tough, and fearless.

No matter your age, it's hard to make your way through life as a man with phrases like "tough it out," "man up," and "act like a man" hanging in the ether above your head. What's more, these well-worn stigmas and expectations can affect a person's mental and physical health throughout adulthood and old age.

June is Men's Health Month. Throughout the country, healthcare providers are engaging with the men they serve and working to help them overcome these stigmas and stay on the path to good overall health.

Rejecting Toxic Masculinity

Toxic masculinity is a term often used to describe exaggerated masculine traits that are either widely accepted or glorified. Often, a person's manliness is based on things like strength, dominance, sexual virility, lack of emotion, and self-sufficiency. Those who don't display these traits right run the risk of being labeled "not a real man."

The result? Men can become individuals who are aggressive, unable to show their emotions, isolated, or sexist.

As men age, those who have lived in this environment may be less likely to seek out help for possible health issues or other problems.



In addition to creating a situation in which disease may advance unchecked, mental health issues such as depression, substance abuse, and stress can follow.

If you recognize yourself or your behaviors in the description of toxic masculinity, it's never too late to change. Start by thinking about your own attitudes about masculinity and educating yourself about changing attitudes about masculinity. Consider what it really means to be a man and have open discussions about this with your friends.

By deliberately questioning and working to fight exaggerated traits, men can begin to move beyond outdated ways of thinking.

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Men's Health Issues with Age

Some health problems are more common among men as they age. These include:

- Heart disease
- Loss of bone/muscle mass
- Testicular, prostate, or colorectal cancer
- Dehydration
- Arthritis
- Enlarged prostate
- Incontinence

To catch these problems early, it's important for men to stay on top of recommended health screenings, especially as they age. These screenings check for medical issues, assess your risk for future problems, encourage a healthy lifestyle, and prepare you to deal with potential problems that may develop.

According to [Medline Plus](#), men ages 65 and older should make sure have the following screenings, even if they feel fine.

- Abdominal aortic aneurysm screening (age 65-75). This is a noninvasive ultrasound test.
- Blood pressure screening (all ages). Your doctor will check your blood pressure at your regular visits at least once a year. Those who have conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and kidney problems may need to have their blood pressure checked more often.
- Cholesterol screening (all ages). Those with normal cholesterol levels should have this checked at least every five years. Those who have conditions like high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, and kidney may need to have a cholesterol screening more often.

- Colorectal cancer screening (starting at age 50). Individuals should have a colonoscopy every 10 years to screen for colorectal cancer. Those who have conditions like ulcerative colitis may need to be screened more often.
- Dental exam (all ages). Visit the dentist one to two times each year for an exam and cleaning.
- Diabetes screening (ages 65 and older). You should be screened for diabetes every three years. Those who are overweight or have other risk factors for diabetes may need to be screened more often.
- Lung cancer screening (ages 50-80). This screening with low-dose computed tomography should occur if you are age 50-80 and have a smoking history of 20 packs per year and either currently smoke or quit within the last 15 years.
- Physical exam (all ages). Have an annual exam with your primary care physician.
- Prostate cancer screening (ages 50-69). Talk with your doctor about whether this screening is appropriate for you, given your personal and family medical history.
- Skin exam (all ages). Visiting for regular skin examinations can help identify signs of skin cancer, particularly among those who have had skin cancer or close relatives with skin cancer.

Health: The Key to Personal Freedom

Maintaining good personal health is critical to staying independent as we age. Without it, individuals can begin to develop problems that can limit the freedom to live the life you want.

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The [Cleveland Clinic](#) has outlined simple but important guidelines to help men and women ages 50 and older maintain a healthy lifestyle.

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet. The framework for a healthy diet includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, and proteins like lean meats, beans, and eggs. Consult a dietitian for advice on adjusting your diet.
- Get plenty of sleep. Sleeping seven to eight hours a night will help keep you mentally and physically healthy.
- Get regular physical activity. To improve your health and maintain a healthy weight, consider activities like walking, swimming, and strength training. Talk with your doctor before beginning any new exercise routine.
- Don't smoke. Even if you've been a smoker for years, quitting now can have a big effect on your health and lower the risk of heart attack, stroke, and high blood pressure.
- Limit alcohol consumption. If you drink, try not to consume more than two drinks per day. A drink is 12 ounces of beer, five ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits.
- Get recommended exams and screenings.
- Get vaccinated. Be sure to follow your recommended vaccination schedule, including a flu shot, shingles vaccine, coronavirus vaccine, and pneumonia vaccine.

Additionally, it's important to keep your mind sharp. Maintain your memory and cognitive function by doing mental exercises, engaging

in social activities, and listening to music. If you think you may be depressed, psychological counseling has been proven to help.

By recognizing personal barriers to caring for yourself and taking steps to maintain your personal health and freedom, you can age well and independently at home for years to come.

If you or a loved one need care at home, Intrepid USA is here to assist. Email help@intrepidusa.com to speak with a Patient Advocate today.