

# Men's Health

September's focus is on Men's Health—bringing awareness to preventable health problems and promoting early detection and treatment of diseases like heart disease, cancer, and depression.

The facts:

- The [average lifespan](#) for men is about five years less than for women.
- The top three [causes of men's death](#) are heart disease, cancer, and unintentional injuries.
- Men have [higher rates of getting and dying from cancer](#) than women.
- Men are less likely to seek mental health treatment, resulting in [nearly four times increased likelihood of dying by suicide](#) than women.

You can help by encouraging the men in your life (and yourself) to make healthy choices such as eating right, being active, and getting recommended screenings to detect disease early. Self-care activities and preventive health visits are essential to improving and maintaining health, regardless of age or gender. Men should talk with their primary care providers about what types and how often they should get preventive care based on their age and health history.



Participate in this month's activities to learn more:

**Activity 1:**  
[Is it Time for Your Tune-up?](#)

**Activity 2:**  
[Practice Self-care](#)

**Activity 3:**  
[Get Fit in Seven Minutes or Less](#)

For questions or more information, email [wellness@medica.com](mailto:wellness@medica.com)

# Health Disparities

“Health disparities” are preventable differences in health among different social or racial groups. Health Disparities are a complex and challenging problem across the world. Social factors play the largest role in shaping the overall health of communities. For example, the ability to access healthcare, a safe living environment, racial equity, nutritious food, quality education, and supportive relationships free of discrimination are all incredibly important to your overall health.

People who face health disparities often have a higher risk for some kinds of health issues. In the U.S., certain racial and ethnic groups experience a higher risk of mental health challenges and cancer, with an increased likelihood of being diagnosed with cancer when it has already spread.

## Did You Know?

- African American men “have the lowest life expectancy of any demographic group, living an average of 4.5 fewer years...” ([source](#))
- Over 44% of Hispanic or Latino men aged 20 are obese. ([source](#))
- In 2021, men died by suicide almost 4 times more than women. ([source](#))

For more information, please visit:

- [Prostate Cancer \(Mayo Clinic\)](#)
- [Gay and Bisexual Men’s Health \(Center for Disease Control and Prevention\)](#)
- [5 Ways to Make the Most of Your Doctor Visit \(National Institute on Aging\)](#)

## Activity 1: Is it time for your tune-up?

Just as you’d take your vehicle in for tune-ups and maintenance, regular medical checkups and age-appropriate screenings can improve your health and cut your chances of premature death and disability. Use this checklist as a maintenance guideline for taking care of yourself first, so you can take care of those who mean the most to you.

Checkups, Screenings and Vaccinations	When/Recommended Frequency	Age 18-39	Age 40-59	Age 60 and up
Physical Exam	Annually, to review overall health.	✓	✓	✓
Eye Exam	Refer to page two of the <a href="#">Healthy Vision Toolkit</a> .	✓	✓	✓
Blood Pressure Screening	At least every two years, or more often if recommended by your provider. <b>Note:</b> High blood pressure has no symptoms and can cause stroke, heart attack, kidney and eye problems, and heart failure. If you get an annual checkup, this happens then.	✓	✓	✓
Cholesterol Screening	Starting at age 35, then every five years. If you have certain health conditions such as diabetes or heart disease, or the results of a screening were not normal, you may need to be checked more often.	Age 35	✓	✓
Diabetes Screening	For ages 35 to 70 who are overweight or obese and have no symptoms of diabetes. *Discuss frequency intervals with your provider.	✓*	✓*	✓*

Checkups, Screenings and Vaccinations	When/Recommended Frequency	Age 18-39	Age 40-59	Age 60 and up
<b>Colorectal Cancer Screening</b>	Starting at age 45 and continuing through age 75. *Discuss frequency and screening test options with your provider.		✓* Age 45	✓*
<b>Prostate Cancer Screening</b>	*Discuss with your provider before having a test to talk about your risk profile for prostate cancer. Men who have a family history of prostate cancer or are African American or of African descent might be at higher risk, and could consider starting younger. This is an individualized decision for ages 55-69. Do not routinely screen after 69.		✓* Discuss if age 55-69, possibly younger depending on risk	✓* Do not screen after age 69
<b>Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening</b>	One-time ultrasound for men 65-75 who are current or former smokers.			✓
<b>STD Screening</b>	Discuss with your provider and check with your health plan benefit about coverage.	✓		
<b>Hepatitis C Screening</b>	Once between the ages of 18-79	✓	✓	✓
<b>HIV Screening</b>	Once between the ages of 15-65	✓	✓	✓
<b>HPV Vaccine</b>	*Discuss with your provider. Generally the vaccination is approved to age 27 and in some cases may be approved to age 45.	✓*	✓*	
<b>Flu Shot</b>	Annually	✓	✓	✓
<b>Tetanus-diphtheria Booster</b>	Every 10 years (or sooner if a puncture wound occurs)	✓	✓	✓
<b>Zoster (Shingles) Vaccine</b>	At 50* and over, given in two doses, 2-6 months apart.		✓*	✓
<b>Pneumococcal Vaccine</b>	At 65 (<65 if having a chronic condition that makes more susceptible to pneumococcal pneumonia).			✓

Sources: [US Preventive Services Task Force; Health Screenings for men ages 18-39; Health screenings for men ages 40-64](#)

These are general preventive guidelines for healthy adults at low risk for disease. Talk with your provider about these checkups, screenings, and vaccinations, and set an appropriate maintenance schedule specific to you, based on any risk factors such as a family history.

[Learn more](#) about men's health at different ages, urology services, disease prevention, and prostate health. Plus, if you're a Health Plan member, [log in to your member portal](#) to access Living Healthy and complete your health assessment.

## Activity 2: Practice self-care

Self-care is taking time to focus on yourself and has been thought of (and marketed) as something practiced mainly by women. But men, you should also take the time to practice self-care to improve your mental, emotional, and physical health. Self-care is a personal practice, and there is no one-size-fits-all formula. It can be anything you want so long as it helps you stay physically, mentally, and emotionally well. One great way to start: Pick a new habit to build. As you start to notice the benefits in this area, it could motivate you to try other activities. Not sure where to start? Try these suggestions:

- 1. Make time for yourself.** Set aside 15-20 minutes to relax or do something you enjoy. It might be taking a walk, reading a book, or journaling. Only have five minutes? Check-in with yourself using guided visualization practices. (e.g., [A Walk in the Woods](#), [Gone Fishin'](#), [The Hunt](#))
- 2. See your primary care provider regularly for checkups and preventive care.** Preventive care is one of the most important self-care activities you can do for yourself. [The Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) reports](#) that women are 33% more likely to visit their healthcare provider than men, and women are 100% better at maintaining screening and preventive care. During these visits, your provider can help you identify potential health risks, advise on how to stay healthy and give regular screenings for things such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and colon cancer. These types of screenings can catch problems early when they're most treatable. Don't wait—take an active role in your health and make an appointment today!
- 3. Eat a healthy diet focused on fruits, vegetables, and lean protein.** Eating right is good for both your physical and mental health. It doesn't have to mean giving up all your favorite foods but instead making smarter choices most of the time. Also, drink lots of water!
- 4. Interact with others and talk with others about health issues and how to manage them.** Social interaction is important for good mental health and can offer a sense of belonging, strengthen relationships, and improve mood and well-being. You can learn from each other and develop a plan to manage health issues that might come up. Talking about your health also helps to reduce stress and anxiety levels.
- 5. Get enough sleep (at least seven to eight hours each night).** If you find that you're not getting this, here are some things you can do to help improve:
  - Cut down on caffeine and alcohol consumption, as both can interfere with sleep.
  - Create a relaxing bedtime routine to help you wind down before sleep (e.g., reading or stretching), and turn off all electronic devices.
  - Make sure that your sleeping environment is dark, quiet, and cool.
- 6. Get Physical.** Physical activity can provide many benefits for overall health—higher self-esteem, better sleep, and reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes. It can also help improve mental health by reducing stress and decreasing feelings of depression and anxiety. A gym isn't the only way to incorporate exercise into your life; it can be as simple as taking a walk around the neighborhood. Plus, spending time in nature offers mental and physical health benefits too! (e.g., improved mental function and physical health, increased happiness and vitamin D, reduced stress). Try the [REAL Goal](#) - **Spend More Time in Nature** (see the environmental dimension).

## Activity 3: Get fit in seven minutes or less

The CDC recommends 30 minutes of aerobic exercise per day, five days a week, and two days per week of strength training for older adults. Can't fit in a 30-minute session all at once? That's ok; three 10-minute sessions will work. Or try this seven-minute workout. If you have any concerns about your health, check with your healthcare provider before doing challenging or strenuous activities.



- Perform exercises for 30 seconds each in rapid succession.
- Break for 10 seconds in between each exercise.
- Intensity should be about an eight on a discomfort scale of 1-10.  
If something causes discomfort (not in a challenging way), try to modify the exercise (sidestep instead of jump), or avoid it altogether.
- Learn more about [Kick Starting Your Cardio](#).