

Men's Health Month: A time to act

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June is Men's Health Month — a perfect reminder for men to make wellness a priority. Many men take care of their health, but additional work is needed to keep more men healthy.



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Some of the statistics on men's health are alarming. For example, life expectancy from birth for men in the U.S. is 74.8 years; for women, it's 80.2 years. In addition, more than 41 percent of men aged 20 and over are obese and 14.7 percent of men aged 18 or over are in fair or poor health.

These statistics may be wor-

risome for men and their loved ones, but many of the health risks men face can help be prevented by adopting a healthy lifestyle and getting recommended and timely preventive health screenings.

Men's Health Month is a reminder for men to take charge of their health. I know first-hand what it takes to help men of all ages get and stay healthy. It's what I do every day in my practice as a primary care physician with Optum — Arizona.

Regardless of gender, regular physical activity can help control weight, reduce risks of developing heart disease and some cancers, and can improve overall mental health and mood. Another important priority is nutrition. It's important to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables

every day, include whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean protein and limit foods and drinks higher in sugar, salt, and saturated fat; if you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation — which for men is 2 or less drinks per day.

There are other important reminders for men, including managing any chronic health conditions and following treatment plans. In addition, work with a doctor to get a full understanding of the purpose and side effects of the prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs and supplements that you may take. Do not overlook the importance of using sunscreen, since skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S.

It's also important for men and those close to them to be aware

of the warning signs of any mental health difficulties. For example, if you have mild symptoms that have lasted for less than two weeks such as trouble sleeping or feeling down, engaging in self-care activities can be a good starting point to feel better. If symptoms are severe, persistent, or are worsening, talk to your health care provider. Symptoms may include:

- Trouble sleeping
- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor appetite changes
- Loss of interest in things that you usually find enjoyable
- Inability to perform normal responsibilities and daily functions or struggling to get out of bed in the morning due to mood.
- Thoughts of self-harm or

death

If you or someone you know have thoughts about suicide, seek help right away. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911 — or go to the closest emergency room.

To reach a trained crisis counselor, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). You may also chat at 988.lifeline.org.

Men's National Health Month is a reminder for men to take a proactive approach to their health. If you or the men in your life are not making positive health choices, now is the perfect time to take charge of your health.

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