

Health Maintenance for Men

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Exercise

Aerobic exercise such as walking, swimming, running or bicycling improves your cardiovascular fitness. It strengthens your heart, lungs, and muscles. It also helps control obesity, diabetes, and high cholesterol. Guidelines suggest an accumulated 30 minutes of aerobic exercise at least three times each week. During this, you should never be so short of breath you cannot carry a conversation. Questions? Ask your doctor.

Nutrition

Eating foods for good health and to control weight are virtually the same thing. Be sure to consume foods rich in complex carbohydrates and fiber, like whole grains, fruits and vegetables. You should aim for 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. No more than 30% of your diet should be fat (less if you're trying to lose weight). Avoid sugar, fast foods, fried foods and "junk foods". We have a nutritionist at our office who can help you develop a plan for weight loss and better eating to improve health.

Vitamins

The most important way to get vitamins is through a well-balanced diet. If you are not meeting that, consider taking a multivitamin.

Osteoporosis Prevention

Osteoporosis is thinning of the bones, which often leads to hip and spine fractures as we age. Although usually thought of as a disease of women, men get osteoporosis, too. Everyone should perform regular weight bearing exercise to keep the bones strong (walking, running, etc.). Men should be taking 1000-1500 mg of calcium daily. Vitamin D is also important. If you are not sure if you meet these recommendations, see our nutritionist or your doctor.

Smoking

If you smoke, the most important thing you can do for your health is QUIT! Smoking contributes to heart disease, heart attacks, lung and other cancers, strokes, and poor circulation. Cigars, chewing tobacco, and second-hand smoke are just as bad for you. Start by selecting a quit date. There are many aids for smoking cessation including the patch, medication, gum, inhalers, and hypnosis. Your doctor can help you explore these options. We also have a smoking cessation counselor.

Safety

The most common cause of death of healthy people is accidents. Wear a seatbelt even on short trips; wear a helmet while biking. Rollerbladers should wear helmets and knee-hand-elbow pads. Choose a designated driver if you drink alcohol. And be sure any guns at home are unloaded and locked away from children. Ammunition should be locked in a separate place. Your local police department can help you dispose of guns if you choose.

Advanced Directives

These are written instructions about end of life issues in the form of a living will or durable power of attorney for health care. It allows you to take care of yourself and your family by making decisions about your future medical care while your health allows you to do so. It is important for each person to document these wishes before serious illness occurs. Just ask your doctor for further information.

Organ Donation

There is a national shortage of organs (livers, hearts, kidneys, etc) for very ill people. You can become an organ donor by signing your driver's license and notifying your family of your wishes. Call 1-800-545-GIFT (Regional Organ Bank of Illinois, www.ROBI.org) or ask your doctor if you have questions.

Prostate Cancer Screening

Prostate cancer is very common among older men. It is often a very slow growing cancer and sometimes even without symptoms. In some cases the treatment can cause more problems than the cancer itself. After age 40-50, men can be screened for prostate cancer with a rectal exam and even blood tests (PSA). You should discuss these options with your doctor. However, if you have changes in urination, you definitely should see your doctor.

Colon Cancer Screening

Screening for colon cancer is performed on everyone after age 50 (or sooner if you have a problem or family history of colon cancer). Yearly stool cards looking for blood in the stool should be done. You will need to take these home and return them to the office. Every 3-5 years, a flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy should be performed.

Skin Cancer Screening

Skin cancer is becoming one of the most common and devastating cancers. To help prevent it, you should avoid the sun especially between 10am and 3pm, wear light cotton clothing to cover skin, and wear sun block on all exposed skin everyday. The sun block should cover both UVA and UVB rays and be at least SPF 15 (more is better). You should watch for skin lesions that grow, change color, bleed or are irregularly shaped.

Cholesterol Screening

High cholesterol can lead to heart attacks, strokes and poor circulation. Eat right! Avoid fatty, fried foods. Exercise! Blood work for cholesterol should be performed about every 5 years starting in the 20's.

Vaccines

A tetanus booster should be given every 10 years or sooner if you have an injury. People over 65 should have a pneumovax (pneumonia vaccine) once and a flu shot yearly. If you have any chronic medical conditions, you should have these more often. The hepatitis B vaccine is being given to all children. Most adults missed this opportunity. If you would like to be protected against Hepatitis B (spread through sex, IV drugs), just ask your doctor.