

MEN HAVE SHORTER LIFESPANS

Question: I am a middle-aged man and recently read that my lifespan is five years shorter than women. Why is that? What can I do to improve my chances for a long life?

Answer: You are correct. The average life expectancy of a man is 75 years, which is more than 5 years shorter than a woman. At every stage of life – from infancy to teen years to middle age – men have a higher risk of getting sick and dying than a woman.

On average, men are 40% more likely to die at any age.

Men are taught to be stoic about pain and often avoid doctors when warning signs are present. Men also engage in more risky behavior than women, such as reckless driving and extreme sports.

Men can address 6 issues to improve health and longevity:

- Check your blood pressure. High blood pressure is very hard on the cardiovascular system.
- Check your cholesterol. High cholesterol clogs your arteries, eventually causing a wide array of problems.
- Measure your waist. A waist size above 40 inches for men (35 inches for women) increases your risk for heart disease.
- Sexual health. If you experience a decline in erectile function, this may be an early warning sign of heart disease or diabetes.
- Limit alcohol. Drinking 3 or more drinks per day increases your risk of dying sooner and being unhealthy during elderly years. Limit alcohol to 2 or less per day.
- Wear your seatbelt. Accidents are the leading cause of death until age 44 and remain a top killer throughout a man's life.

The big killers of men include heart disease, prostate cancer, injuries and suicide. Men are not as likely to see doctors on a preventative basis for screening of heart disease and prostate cancer. Simply doing so can improve long-term survival.

Twice as many women are diagnosed with depression as men. We assume that depression is a women's health issue. But it simply may not be recognized in men.

Men typically don't cry and express emotions. However, they may drink too much or become withdrawn socially.

Suicide rates are four times higher for men than women. Between the ages of 15 and 34, it is the second leading cause of death among men. It continues to remain among the top 5 killers of men until the age of 54.

Exercise is an essential ingredient to maintaining a man's health. This helps with weight management, keeps cholesterol and blood pressure under control, improves sexual function and helps boost mood, fighting depression.

Studies show boys tend to mimic behavior of their dads, while girls copy their mothers. A father that takes regular care of himself will have a big impact on his son's health in future years.

I've always said that my parents gave me the gift of exercise. My father played handball until the age of 60. He often played basketball and baseball with us in the backyard. My mother mimicked Jack LaLanne's exercise program on TV back in the 60's.

I continue the tradition myself running regularly, getting the family out on bikes and taking hikes.

Consult your family doctor or chiropractor for beginning your exercise program. You can begin your journey to a healthier, longer life now!

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