

Men's Health Month is the perfect time for men to take stock of their health

June is Men's Health Awareness Month; it's a good time to consider the steps men need to take to become and remain healthy.

Back in 1920, men lived longer than women by an average of one year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But today, the average woman lives six years longer than the average man. Furthermore, men are 60 percent more likely to develop heart disease than women, and men are 44 percent more likely to get cancer. According to the Men's Health Network, this is because men are less likely to adopt preventative health measures and are more likely to engage in risky behaviors. Men are also more likely to go long periods of time without seeing a doctor.

"Regular check-ups are not just for women," says Dr. Taylor, M.D., Director of Newman Memorial's Emergency Department. "Men should visit their primary-care physician at least every year for a complete physical."

With regular check-ups, a patient's blood pressure, weight, cholesterol and other markers of overall health can be tracked. Check-ups also ensure that screenings are initiated as recommended for colorectal cancer, prostate cancer and other diseases, based on the patient's individual and family health history.

"It's important for men to be proactive about their health," says Dr. Taylor, M.D. "Men are notorious for ignoring unusual symptoms and avoiding the doctor. Their wives or family members are often the driving force for men to see a doctor."

Besides seeing the doctor for a regular physical, men should pay attention to other aspects of a healthy life. Here are some tips that every man should follow:

- **Get good sleep.** Adults need between 7-9 hours of sleep. Inadequate sleep is associated with a number of chronic diseases and conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and depression.
- **Stop using tobacco.** Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of death and disease in the U. S. Quitting produces immediate and long-term benefits; it lowers the risk of heart disease, cancer, lung disease, and other illnesses. Avoid second-hand smoke, which can also cause heart disease, lung cancer, and stroke.
- **Get active.** More than one-third of U.S. adults are obese. Adults should get at least two and a half hours of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week, and muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week. Choose activities you enjoy, such as tennis, basketball or brisk walking. All physical activity benefits your health.

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Losing excess pounds, and keeping them off can lower your risk of heart disease as well as various types of cancer.
- **Eat healthy.** Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables every day, as they are sources of many vitamins and minerals. Choose healthy snacks. Limit food and drinks high in calories, sugar, salt, fat, and alcohol.
- **Manage stress levels.** If you feel constantly on edge or under pressure, your lifestyle habits may suffer, and so might your immune system. Take steps to reduce stress, or learn to deal with stress in healthy ways.
- **Limit alcohol.** If you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation.

“Your doctor can be your best ally for preventing health issues,” says Dr. Taylor, M.D. “Don’t wait until something is wrong before you make an appointment, get regular check-ups.”

Take this opportunity during Men’s Health Awareness Month to make an appointment with your physician. Healthier men live happier, longer lives.