

## **Preventive Medicine for Men: An ounce of prevention is worth pounds of cure**

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One of the most important concerns of healthcare providers is preventing problems before they begin. With regard to life expectancy, men are actually catching up to women and it is expected that if current trends continue, men and women will be living about the same length of time. There are many reasons for this change, including the promotion of healthier lifestyles. Screening and treating conditions before they become advanced is also a very important factor. When followed appropriately, current screening and immunization schedules can both increase quality of life and decrease overall healthcare costs. Even if a common condition such as high blood pressure, for example, is discovered, appropriate treatment can prevent more serious complications. But here is the challenge: many conditions can be "silent" or go undetected until specifically looked for.

High blood pressure, for instance, is often only discovered by routine checks in the medical provider's office. Although sometimes symptoms of a condition can prompt a patient to come in, high blood pressure, like a lot of preventable diseases in their early stages, often has no obvious symptoms. When identified, understood, and controlled, complications of high blood pressure - like heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, and vision problems - can also be minimized.

Below is a list of recommended screening guidelines for MEN:

### **For men in general (all age groups):**

Men should have a complete physical exam, including cholesterol screening, at least every three years after the age of twenty even if completely healthy. Exams should be more often if the man is not completely healthy. Like everyone else, men should have a dental exam every six months. Men should have eye exams whenever they notice problems or changes in their vision. They should have their blood pressure checked once per year if there are no current problems with high blood pressure, and generally should have their blood sugar levels checks annually as well. Healthcare providers may tell their male patients to come in more or less frequently or may also recommend testing for sexually transmitted diseases depending on the men's individual history and risk factors.

### **For men over 40 years old:**

Men over 40 years old should follow the guidelines above, but should schedule an eye exam every two to four years. Healthcare providers may also begin recommending a rectal exam, EKG and/or fecal occult blood screening be done during the physical exam, depending on the men's individual history and risk factors.

### **For men over 50 years old:**

Men over 50 years old should follow all of the above guidelines, and should also expect that during their physical exams their medical provider will also recommend a prostate exam, and may recommend a procedure to screen for colon cancer, and/or a blood test to screen for prostate cancer.

For all men, during any preventive visit, topics to consider discussing with your medical provider include: testicular self-exam, skin cancer prevention, sexually transmitted disease prevention, birth

control options, nutrition, chemical dependency, mental and emotional health, smoking cessation, safety, exercise, and immunizations.

As with the case of high blood pressure above, many conditions cannot be treated or prevented without specifically looking for them. You can take a proactive approach by taking responsibility to see a healthcare provider and discuss an appropriate plan for your individual needs. This includes asking questions, following up, and discussing the best treatment approach for yourself and your family.