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Men’s Health Month: Raising Awareness for Young Men

You’re a male in the prime of your life. You feel great, and the last thing on your mind is making sure you schedule regular doctor appointments. But, for men age 18 to 39, it’s more important than you think.

I Feel Fine: Do I Need a Screening?

Even if you feel healthy, it’s important to schedule regular health screenings with your doctor. The purpose of these visits is to do the following:

- Screen for diseases
- Assess risk of future medical problems
- Help develop a healthy lifestyle
- Update vaccinations (flu shot annually and tetanus every 10 years)
- Maintain a relationship with a doctor in case of an illness

Once a male turns 18, a physical is recommended every year and should include these components:

1. Head-to-toe exam to establish a baseline
   Think of this like a sport physical. It’s nothing invasive; it’s just a way for a doctor to get information such as your height, weight, and BMI, and to ask questions/discuss your health and lifestyle.

2. Blood Pressure check for hypertension
   The only way to tell if you have high blood pressure, or are at risk for it, is to have it checked regularly. It’s best to have your blood pressure checked every two years, and watch for opportunities to check it at a station in the gym, at work, or school.

3. Cholesterol screening
   Men older than age 35, in particular, should have their cholesterol screened every five years. If you have risk factors for heart disease, it’s best to start getting screenings in your 20s. The key thing to keep in mind here is that to determine whether those risk factors even exist, you have to make some visits to a doctor throughout your young adult life.

Building Men’s Health Awareness:

While these screenings are recommended for men ages 18 to 39, Scott Massa MD, an internist with Physician Associates of Good Samaritan - Delhi, emphasizes that we also need to build men’s health awareness among this group. Dr. Massa explains, “This age group, in general, does not think about going to the doctor largely because they are healthy, symptom-free and feel bullet-proof.”
The Importance of Exercise to Men’s Health

Most of us understand the importance of exercise for heart health and weight control; however, the list of benefits continues to grow. As men age, being physically active can improve their quality of life in some of the following ways:

- **Higher testosterone levels.** Research suggests that exercise may help counter the drop in testosterone that naturally occurs as men age.

- **Improved resiliency.** Regular physical activity can relieve tension, depression, anxiety and anger. As little as 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day can boost energy levels, improve sleep quality and bolster self-image.

- **Lower risk of death from diabetes and sleep apnea.** Obstructive sleep apnea is a disorder in which you frequently stop breathing during your sleep. It’s associated with an increased risk of diabetes. Moderate exercise decreases the risk of death from both conditions.

- **Improved brain function.** Exercise helps keep blood vessels throughout the body healthy and reduces the risk of stroke. Several studies suggest that exercise might also help ward off Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia.

- **Improved strength and mobility.** Although more commonly associated with women, men also can develop thinning of the bones with age. Regular weight-bearing exercise can help slow this bone loss by stimulating growth of new bone. Exercise also helps keep joint cartilage healthy.

Getting and staying physically active is one of the most powerful ways to lower your chances of getting many age-related diseases and to increase your chances of staying active and independent. Guidelines vary by health status, but if you’re healthy overall, you should be able to safely exercise five or six days a week, at a moderately intense level for 20 to 30 minutes.

Talk with your doctor about how much - and what kind of - activity is safe for you before beginning any exercise program.

Sources: DailyHealthWire.com, Harvard Health Publishing, Mayo Clinic

Understanding the Impact of Stress on Wellbeing

Stress can play a significant role in the wellbeing of men, and every age range has its own stresses and challenges. For a 20-year-old, college might be overwhelming. Next, marriage and family, and later in this group their job could add stress. There’s a reason stress is known as a silent killer.

**Signs you may be experiencing dangerous stress levels:**

- Change in appetite or eating habits
- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Sleeping more than usual
- Low energy
- Trouble with memory or concentration
- Isolating from friends and/or family
- Muscle tension/ new aches and pains

If you notice you are feeling overwhelmed, talk to someone. A trusted friend, your spouse, your physician or a counselor, all can help provide some relief by being supportive, giving you new perspectives, and offering resources or tips for how to relax or make other positive changes.