



A Local Healthy Maine Partnership

Men's Health Month

May 2009 Newsletter

Healthy Waldo County



Strokes: What Every Man Needs to Know

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Why should I care about strokes?

If you're like most middle-aged men, you probably don't spend much time worrying about stroke symptoms. After all, strokes are a risk we associate with later in life — something to fret about after we retire.

But maybe we should be a little more concerned. Strokes are, the fourth most common cause of death in all men — behind heart disease, cancer, and accidents. They are indeed more likely in men over 65, but they can happen at any age.

General symptoms of a stroke include **sudden** onset of:

- Numbness, weakness, or paralysis of the face, arm, or leg, typically on one side of the body.
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes, such as dimness, blurring, double vision, or loss of vision.
- Confusion, trouble understanding.
- Slurred or garbled speech.
- Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Severe headache.

If you are at risk for a stroke, talk to your doctor.

How can I prevent a stroke?

Strokes are best prevented by controlling high blood pressure. To decrease the risks, you need to keep your arteries clear of plaque — the gunk that builds up in them and leads to clotting.

Ways to do this include:

-**Exercise** at least 1/2 hour a day

-**Eating right** — preferably a diet low in saturated fat (& high in fruits & vegetables)

-**Maintain ideal weight**

If you smoke, consider **quitting**— smokers are twice as likely to have a stroke.

“Health is not simply the absence of sickness.”



Hannah Green

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Safety at Parties— Tips for Teens

As fun as parties may be, they can also get out of control. These tips will help you to think ahead before you head out to a party and know what to do if things get out of hand.

Planning Ahead

- It's a good idea to tell your parents or an adult where you'll be before you leave the house.
- It's helpful to go to a party with friends who you know are responsible.
- Keep an eye out for signs of risk like a lot of alcohol or drug use. If you see things that make you uncomfortable, get your group of friends together and leave.
- It's okay for you to leave, even if your friends are not ready. If you feel awkward leaving, you can say you don't feel well, or that your parents want you to come home.

What to know

People who are drunk or high often make bad decisions such as getting in a fight. Alcohol and drugs affect everyone differently, so even someone you know well could act violent. People who have been drinking or taking drugs can't think clearly. Make sure that you aren't pressuring someone into something (like having sex or taking drugs with you) that they or you will regret later. If someone pressures you to drink or take drugs, have some responses ready to help you refuse.

Spiked drinks

It is possible that someone at a party might think it would be funny to get you drunk, and spike your drink with alcohol or another drug. Although you may not be able to tell if a drink has been tampered with, if something doesn't look or smell right to you, don't drink it. When you're at a party, always get your own drink. If you put your drink down and accidentally forget about it, just pour it out and get another one.

Get Home Safely

- Never leave with strangers
- If you are walking, arrange to walk with a friend
- Never drive if you have been drinking alcohol or using marijuana or other drugs
- Never get in a car with another driver who has been drinking alcohol or using marijuana or other drugs
- If you need help getting home, call your parents or another adult

Develop a safety plan

Developing a safety plan is one way to help you stay safe in many situations. Here are some tips:

- Tell your parents or other adult where you are going, who you will be with, and when you will be back
- Carry money, a phone card, or a cell phone in case you need to make an emergency phone call. Don't forget to keep emergency numbers or program them into your cell phone
- Stay in well-lit public places
- Stick with another person or a group of your friends
- Be aware of strangers. If you talk to them, don't volunteer information about yourself. Agree on a code word to use on the phone with your family so they know you need help.

For more information on young men's health go to: <http://www.youngmenshealthsite.org>

Top 10 Health Risks For Men

These are the worst of the worst -- the 10 most dangerous diseases for men. Every man needs to know what he's up against. The good news? Many are preventable.

1. Heart Attack and Cardiac Arrest You've heard the terms a million times. But do you really know the difference between a heart attack and cardiac arrest? Here's what every guy needs to know.
<http://men.webmd.com/heart-attack-cardiac-arrest>
2. High Blood Pressure in Men Many men have it for years and don't know it, while high blood pressure silently damages their arteries. Here's how to make sure you're not one of them.
<http://men.webmd.com/high-blood-pressure>
3. High Cholesterol in Men: With the way men like to eat, the risk of high cholesterol begins as early as our 20s and keeps going up. Find out how to stay ahead of it.
<http://men.webmd.com/high-cholesterol>
4. Strokes in Men: They're the fourth leading cause of death in men, but most guys can't name one stroke symptom. Here's how to recognize and prevent a stroke:
<http://men.webmd.com/strokes-what-every-man-needs-know>
5. Diabetes in Men: Diabetes is on the rise, especially among men. Don't be part of the epidemic. Read about the causes of diabetes and how to prevent it.
<http://men.webmd.com/diabetes-men>
6. Lung Cancer in Men: It's still the leader in cancer deaths, and young men continue to smoke. But lung cancer is also one of the most preventable cancers.
<http://men.webmd.com/lung-cancer>
7. Colorectal Cancer in Men: The bad news: It's the second leading cause of cancer deaths in men. The good news: It's often preventable -- and men may benefit from earlier screening than women.
<http://men.webmd.com/rectal-colon-cancer>
8. Prostate Disease: What is this troublesome gland, the prostate? How often do you need the dreaded rectal exam? Here's a look at prostate health problems: prostatitis, BPH, and cancer.
<http://men.webmd.com/prostate-problems>
9. Testicular Disease: It is the most common cause of cancer in young men -- and usually curable. Get the lowdown on testicular cancer and other testicular diseases.
<http://men.webmd.com/testicular-disease>
10. Depression in Men: Depression in men is serious; suicide is the eighth most common cause of death in men. And because we may exhibit different symptoms than women, it often goes untreated
<http://men.webmd.com/depression-how-recognize-what-do-about>



Must-have Medical Tests

The following is a list of tests that every man should have performed routinely:

- **Blood Pressure.** High blood pressure can cause serious organ damage or death. But screening for it is easy and reliable. The task force recommends screening all adults for high blood pressure, and a blood pressure check is part of most routine doctor's visits. In some cases, however, the stress of visiting a doctor may cause your blood pressure to go up. James King, MD, a family physician in Tennessee, recommends also getting tested at a drugstore or using a home testing kit to get a more reliable reading.
- **Cholesterol.** Cholesterol screening for all men 35 and up. It also recommends screening for men 20 and up if they have other risk factors for heart disease. Examples might be diabetes or a family history of heart disease or high cholesterol. After that, the task force suggests cholesterol checks every 5 years or more often if your cholesterol is borderline high. How long must this go on? Cholesterol levels are less likely to increase after age 65. So screening may be less necessary after that age.
- **Colorectal cancer.** Colon cancer kills more than 56,000 people every year. But the CDC says that nearly 60% of those deaths could be prevented if everyone was screened properly and treated appropriately. The task force strongly recommends screening of all men (and women) age 50 and up for colorectal cancer. People at higher risk may need to be screened at a younger age. This includes people who have a close relative who had colorectal polyps or cancer or who have inflammatory bowel disease. There are several techniques for screening. Each has its own set of advantages and disadvantages for individual patients. The ideal interval between screenings depends on the test. But CDC data from 2005 suggest that nearly 42 million Americans over 50 have not yet been screened appropriately.
- **Immunizations.** Immunity can fade over time, and vaccine recommendations change over the years. For men over 50, a tetanus booster is recommended every 10 years.
- **Flu shots** are suggested every year for this age group. And a pneumococcal vaccine is recommended once at age 65.



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We're on the web:
www.healthywaldocounty.org

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10 Health Benefits of Regular Exercise for Men

Exercise Health Benefit 1: Lower cholesterol

As most men get older, cholesterol numbers begin to move in the wrong direction. Levels of so-called bad cholesterol — low-density lipoprotein (LDL) — gradually increase. Unfortunately, that combination of high LDL and low HDL is one of the leading risk factors for heart disease.

Exercise Health Benefit 2: Lower triglycerides

Triglycerides are a form of fat found in the blood. Rising triglyceride levels are associated with increased risk of heart disease.

Exercise Health Benefit 3: Lower risk of high blood pressure

As blood pressure climbs, the risk of heart disease and stroke accelerates. Unfortunately, blood pressure levels typically climb as men get older.

Exercise Health Benefit 4: Reduced inflammation

Regular exercise has been shown to reduce levels of C-reactive protein, a measure of inflammation. That matters because cholesterol-laden plaques on the lining of arteries are most likely to break off and cause heart attacks when they become inflamed.

Exercise Health Benefit 5: Better blood vessels

To respond to changing demands for oxygen, blood vessels must be flexible enough to widen and narrow. Smoking, cholesterol build-up, and just plain aging tend to stiffen vessels, increasing heart attack risk.

Exercise Health Benefit 6: Lower risk of diabetes

Adult onset diabetes — fueled mostly by too much body fat — is one of the biggest health worries on the horizon. Staying active can help you keep the weight off.

Exercise Health Benefit 7: A hedge against colon cancer

Colon cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer death in men. A healthier diet (with more fiber and whole grains) is part of the prescription. But exercise turns out to be just as important as diet.

Exercise Health Benefit 8: Strong bones

Another unwelcome effect of aging is thinning bones, which can lead to a greater risk of fractures. In a study that followed 3,262 men from their 40s to their 60s, strenuous physical activity dramatically lowered the risk of hip fractures.

Exercise Health Benefit 9: Weight loss

A lifetime of regular physical activity — even activities as simple as walking half an hour most days — can help keep that belly from bulging over your belt. Several recent studies have shown that men who report doing more physical activity also have slimmer waistlines.

Exercise Health Benefit 10: A longer life

Add it all up and an active life also means a longer and healthier life.