

## **Healthy Steps for Healthy Men**

### **Do you know what threatens your life the most?**

Below are the top causes of death for men in the United States, starting with the most common. These top health threats - most of them preventable - cause millions of men to die each year. Take this opportunity to learn about each health concern and how you can reduce your risks. What you learn may surprise you.

### **No. 1 – Heart Disease**

Heart disease is the greatest health threat to men in the United States today. It was responsible for the deaths of nearly 345,000 men in the year 2000. According to the American Heart Association, men have a greater risk of heart disease and have heart attacks much earlier in life than women do.

All men need to take this disease seriously and understand that this No. 1 killer can often be prevented.

The following healthy habits can reduce your risk of heart attack:

- √ Not smoking.
- √ Exercising.
- √ Eating a healthy diet.
- √ Eating less saturated fat and cholesterol.
- √ Controlling your weight.
- √ Talking with your doctor about taking a daily dose of aspirin.
- √ Following the recommendations of your doctor.

### **No. 2 – Cancer**

In 2000, cancer killed about 286,000 men in the United States. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), the most common cause of cancer death for men is lung cancer, and 90 percent of these deaths are linked to cigarette smoking. Prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death among men. The ACS estimates that 189,000 men were diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2002.

About one-third of all cancer deaths are related to nutrition or other controllable lifestyle factors.

Do all you can to reduce your risks:

- √ Don't smoke or chew tobacco.
- √ Exercise regularly.
- √ Eat a healthy diet.
- √ Avoid excessive sun exposure.
- √ Limit alcohol.
- √ Have regular preventive health screenings.
- √ Know your family medical history and review it with your doctor.

### **No. 3 - Stroke**

Nearly 65,000 men in the United States died of stroke in the year 2000. Stroke is not only the No. 3 killer of men, it's also one of the leading causes of disability in the United States. High blood pressure, smoking, lack of exercise, and a diet high in fat and cholesterol are risk factors you can control. Certain risk factors for stroke, such as family history, age, sex and race can't be controlled.

Steps you can take to prevent stroke include:

- √ Don't smoke or use any tobacco product.
- √ Know your risk factors.
- √ Get your blood pressure checked. (If it's high, follow your doctor's recommendations.)
- √ Lower your intake of cholesterol and saturated fat.
- √ Eat a healthy diet.
- √ Control diabetes.
- √ Maintain a healthy weight.
- √ Exercise regularly.
- √ Manage stress.
- √ Limit alcohol consumption.
- √ Talk with your doctor about taking a daily dose of aspirin.

### **No. 4 - Accidents**

Accidents killed nearly 64,000 men in 2000. The leading cause was motor vehicle crashes. About twice as many men (28,352) as women (13,642) died in traffic accidents.

To reduce your chances of a fatal car crash:

- √ Use your seat belt.
- √ Keep your speed down.
- √ Don't drive while sleepy or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The second-leading cause of fatal injury to men was poisoning — about 9,000 men died of poisoning in 2000.

To reduce your risk of poisoning:

- √ Monitor the air quality in your home.
- √ Have fuel-burning appliances inspected each year.
- √ Store household products in their original containers.
- √ Read and follow label instructions for household products.
- √ Turn on a light when giving or taking medicine and follow label instructions.
- √ Ventilate areas in which you use chemical products
- √ Post the poison control number (1-800-3POISON) by each telephone.

## **No. 5 – Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)**

*Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)* is an overall term for a group of chronic lung conditions including emphysema and chronic bronchitis. The main cause of COPD is smoking, and it's strongly associated with lung cancer, the No. 1 cause of cancer death in men.

In 2000, about 60,000 men in the United States died of COPD. A smoker is 10 times more likely to die of COPD than a nonsmoker. The quality of life for someone with COPD diminishes as the disease progresses — it becomes increasingly more difficult to breathe and engage in physical activities. Eventually you may only be able to breathe with oxygen or a ventilator.

**To reduce your risk of COPD, don't smoke.**

## **No. 6 - Diabetes**

Diabetes is a group of diseases that affect the way your body uses blood sugar (glucose). Of the 17 million people in the United States who have diabetes, almost 6 million don't know they have it. In 2000, nearly 70,000 people died of diabetes and almost 32,000 of them were men.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that has no cure but may be preventable. Many people first become aware of it only when they develop one of its life-threatening complications. Advanced diabetes can cause blindness, kidney disease and severe nerve damage. People with diabetes are also two to four times more likely to have heart disease and suffer from stroke. The most common form of diabetes is type 2 diabetes (formerly called adult-onset or noninsulin-dependent diabetes). This form of diabetes generally develops after age 40 and is linked to obesity. Type 2 diabetes is now occurring at younger ages.

To reduce your risk of developing the disease:

- √ Exercise.
- √ Eat a healthy diet.

To slow the progression of the disease:

- √ Exercise.
- √ Eat a healthy diet.
- √ Control your blood sugar.

## **No. 7 - Pneumonia and Influenza**

Influenza and pneumonia killed almost 29,000 men in 2000. When associated with other chronic health conditions, pneumonia and influenza can be life-threatening. People with COPD, asthma, heart disease, diabetes and conditions that suppress the immune system are at high risk. Because both pneumonia and influenza affect the lungs, smoking increases the danger of pneumonia and influenza.

Your risk of pneumonia and influenza can be reduced by immunizations. A yearly flu shot can be up to 90-percent effective in preventing influenza in healthy adults. The vaccine can reduce your risk of getting pneumonia by 60 percent to 70 percent. Stay healthy – get those shots.

## **No. 8 - Suicide**

Men commit suicide four times more often than women do. Men 65 and older have the highest suicide rate. In 2000, about 24,000 men in the United States killed themselves. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, almost all men over 65 who kill themselves suffered from depression. Men are more likely than women to use deadlier means — such as guns — when they attempt suicide.

Warning signs of suicide include:

- √ Moodiness.
- √ Social withdrawal.
- √ Life crisis.
- √ Personality change.
- √ Depression.
- √ Feelings of worthlessness.
- √ Alcohol or drug abuse.
- √ Aggression.
- √ Thoughts or comments about ending one's life.

If you notice these feelings in yourself, talk with your doctor about your concern that you might harm yourself. In an urgent situation, an emergency room or crisis center can help. Friends or family members may notice these changes in your behavior, even though you may attribute them to something other than depression. Take their advice and seek help.

## **No. 9 - Kidney Disease**

Kidney disease killed nearly 18,000 men in 2000. According to the National Kidney Foundation, more than 20 million Americans have chronic kidney disease and more than 20 million others are at increased risk. More than 378,000 Americans with kidney disease need dialysis or a kidney transplant.

To maintain good kidney function:

- √ Drink plenty of fluids.
- √ Exercise regularly.

- √ Maintain your proper weight.
- √ Don't smoke.
- √ Get checked regularly for diabetes and high blood pressure.
- √ Minimize analgesics.
- √ Take medications only as directed

## **No.10 - Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis**

Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis killed about 17,000 men in the United States in 2000. According to the American Liver Foundation, alcoholic liver disease and chronic hepatitis C are the leading causes of cirrhosis, sending about 300,000 people in the United States to the hospital each year. Cirrhosis is the scarring that results when liver tissue is destroyed by infection, poison or disease. Cirrhosis is serious and irreversible. There's no cure for cirrhosis. Diseases of the liver often have no symptoms and can be caused by hepatitis, certain inherited diseases and alcoholism. Excessive drinking can cause a condition known as fatty liver - liver cells swollen with fat globules and water - and can eventually lead to liver disease, cirrhosis and liver failure. The most effective treatment for liver failure is a liver transplant.

To reduce your risk:

- √ Don't drink alcohol to excess.
- √ Be careful and take precautions when using possibly hazardous chemical substances.
- √ Practice safe sex.
- √ Avoid illegal drugs.
- √ Take medications only as directed.
- √ Get a hepatitis B vaccination, and a hepatitis A vaccination if you're at risk.
- √ If you develop viral hepatitis, remain under the care of your doctor until you've recovered.

Adapted from MayoClinic – Men's Top Health Threats

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