



STAYING HEALTHY AT ANY AGE

Caring for men's health

Men have thrived on challenges throughout history. The challenge to discover new lands, climb higher mountains and solve what seemed impossible tasks. It is now evident men need to unite and embrace a new challenge - to improve their collective health.

However we look at it, men are far less healthy than women. The average life expectancy for men is five years less than women (presently 76 compared to 81). Men access health services much less than women, thereby denying themselves the chance for prevention and early detection of common diseases.

The obvious question is why? Part of the answer is a lack of awareness about the very real health issues faced by men. The good old "everything's okay" attitude and a reluctance to see a doctor about an illness or for regular medical checks also contribute to the problems. The main health issues faced by men are listed below:

Depression

Depression affects 1 in 6 men and most usually don't seek help. It is a leading risk factor for suicide. Depression is a very common illness that can affect anyone, male or female, of any age and at almost any time. It's more than feeling blue or down in the dumps for a few days - depression is a longer-lasting condition that can, in many cases, completely dominate daily life.

Smoking

More males than females are current smokers (28% and 21% respectively). Around 36% of males aged 18-34 years smoke compared to 7% of males aged 75 years and over. Smoking is a significant cause of many diseases, including coronary heart disease, stroke and numerous cancers and it is one of the leading causes of death in Victoria. Among all lifestyle-related risk factors, smoking is responsible for the greatest burden of premature death and disability in the state.

Alcohol

Men in the Geelong region are twice as likely to be engaging in weekly drinking patterns that will cause harm to their health than women. Long-term excessive use of alcohol can lead to a number of

physical, emotional and social problems including alcohol addiction, liver, heart and brain damage, depression, family and relationship problems.

Weight problems

In our region, around 52% of men are overweight or obese, which is close to the Victorian average. However, nearly 69% of men aged 45 to 54 years are overweight or obese - by far the worst age group when compared to the region average. While around 70% of men in our region undertake a reasonable level of regular physical activity that can help achieve health benefits, almost 1 in 4 are physically inactive or do not do enough exercise. Health problems related to being overweight include diabetes, raised cholesterol and heart disease, raised blood pressure and stroke, colon and prostate cancers, breathlessness, snoring, sleep disturbances, knee, ankle and back pain, osteoarthritis, excess sweating, athlete's foot, sexual difficulties, gallstones, low self-esteem and depression.

Diabetes

More men have diabetes, and are at risk of developing diabetes in their lifetime, than women. Between 2001 and 2006 in the Greater Geelong area there was a 68% increase in the prevalence of diabetes and nearly 1 in 25 of the population diagnosed in 2006. This number is estimated to be at least double if you add in those people with diabetes but not yet diagnosed. Left untreated this can lead to major health problems, such as blindness, kidney failure, heart disease, stroke and nerve damage (which can, in turn, lead to impotence). The key to avoiding these complications is early diagnosis, effective treatment and good self-management.

Cancer

Prostate cancer is one of the most common types of cancer affecting men, particularly the over 50s. Of all the men who are diagnosed with cancer each year, about one-third have prostate cancer. When caught and treated early, prostate cancer has a cure rate of over 90% but it can still be a life-altering experience for the man diagnosed and for his family.

Men's Health Check

Some of the big picture issues you need to watch for:

18-39 years

- Early stage heart disease, high blood pressure & stroke
- Testicular cancer
- Injuries
- Relationship difficulties
- Drug and alcohol issues
- Weight
- Skin cancers such as Melanoma
- Mental health & wellbeing
- Emotional wellbeing

40-49 years

- Heart disease, high blood pressure & stroke
- Diabetes
- Drug & alcohol issues
- Weight
- Respiratory illness
- Cancers – skin, lung, bowel
- Erectile difficulties
- Mental health & wellbeing
- Emotional wellbeing

50 years & over

- Heart disease, high blood pressure & stroke
- Diabetes
- Drug & alcohol issues
- Weight
- Respiratory illness
- Mental health & wellbeing
- Cancers – bowel, prostate and skin
- Erectile difficulties
- Emotional wellbeing



How can Barwon Health help?

Barwon Health has five major community health centres that provide a range of services to the Geelong region including; continence services, day respite, dental, district nursing, home referral services, carer respite, community palliative care, family planning, youth work, immunisation, podiatry, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, psychology/counselling, dietician, speech pathology, massage and community health nursing and regional palliative care.

How to contact your nearest Community Health Centre:

Anglesea	11 McMillan Street	5260 3901
Belmont	1-17 Reynolds Road	5260 3778
Corio	2 Gellibrand Street	5260 3800
Newcomb	104-108 Bellarine Hwy	5260 3333
Torquay	100 Surfcoast Hwy	5260 3900

Where to get more information & help

- Your doctor
- Men's Line Australia 1300 789 978
- Bethany Community Support 5278 8122
- 24 hour 'Nurse on Call 1300 606 024
- Better Health Channel www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Sources: Barwon Health, Better Health Channel, Department of Human Services, Guidelines for Preventative Activities in General Practice RACGP (2002), Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, Monvember Foundation, Men's Sheds Australia, Nutrition Australia, VicHealth, Diabetes Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

"Staying healthy at any age" is a five part health education series produced quarterly by Barwon Health, promoting health services available in the Geelong region and is an initiative of the Barwon Health Community Engagement Committee. For more information or for copies of the fact sheets, please visit our website www.barwonhealth.org.au or contact 03 5226 7111.

