



Mens Health Awareness Month

November 2023



PAN-AFRICAN
MANAGED CARE

LET'S TALK ABOUT MEN'S HEALTH

Men face unique challenges when it comes to their health, such as higher rates of heart disease and prostate cancer. Additionally, societal expectations and stigmas around masculinity can discourage men from seeking medical help or discussing their health concerns with others.

It is time to start the conversation and break down the barriers that prevent men from achieving optimal health. South African men experience a greater share of the total fatal and non-fatal burden of disease, dying at younger ages (life expectancy at birth – 61.5 years) than females and more often from preventable causes. Male deaths consistently outnumbered female deaths.



More women knew their HIV status than men, and disproportionately more have accessed antiretroviral treatment (ART) than men. South Africa's performance on UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets highlights these findings; in 2016, only 82% of men knew their HIV status, with 54% on treatment, compared to 90% and 65% for women.

This article looks at health challenges faced by young and old men in general including preventative care and treatment.

MEN'S HEALTH IN YOUNGER MEN

Undescended Testes

At full-term a baby boy should have both testes palpable in the scrotum. Undescended testis (UDT) is the second most common pediatric surgical condition after inguinal hernias. It refers to a testis that is not in the scrotum by the age of three months because of a failure of normal descent.

Five per cent of boys have a UDT at birth, 1% – 2% at three months and 1% at one year; hence, it is uncommon for testes to descend after three months. Risks of undescended testes: Infertility, Malignant transformation, Hernia.



Testicular Torsion

This condition presents with the sudden onset of pain in the scrotum occurring spontaneously. It will often wake patients from sleep. It is an emergency, needing surgery within 6 hours. It typically occurs in adolescents following the growth spurt, during which there is an increase in the testicular size.



MEN'S HEALTH IN YOUNGER MEN

Testicular Cancer

The age group at risk for testicular cancer is 15 to 35 year old males. It presents as a lump in the testis. Ideally monthly testicular self-examination should be conducted. Testicular cancer is highly curable. Patients should not delay seeking medical attention. Make an appointment with your doctor if you:

- Are not able to find one or both testicles.
- Feel a group of soft, thin tubes above your testicles.
- Find a hard lump, even a tiny one.
- Have discomfort, pain or swelling in your scrotum.



STI's and Circumcision

Studies have shown that circumcision does reduce the rate of STI's and cancer of the penis. As do appropriately cautious sexual behaviour and good personal hygiene.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI / STD)

These may present as growths or ulcers on the penis or as a discharge from the urethra. STD's can affect anyone who is sexually active, regardless of their age, race, or sexual orientation. However, many STD's are highly preventable.

Abstinence is the only foolproof method to protect against STD's. However, by being aware of changes in your body and practicing safer sex, you can protect yourself and your partners. Consistently using condoms and other barrier methods makes transmission less likely.

MEN'S HEALTH IN OLDER MEN

Benign Prostate Hyperplasia (BPH)

Enlarged prostate is also called benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). The prostate naturally grows as you age. As it grows, it can press on the urethra. The older you are, the more likely you will have BPH. Some men may start having symptoms of BPH in their forties. This is different from prostate cancer. It is not life-threatening, but it can decrease your quality of life, causing:

- Bladder incontinence.
- Difficulty emptying the bladder.
- Frequent nighttime trips to the bathroom.
- Pain when urinating.
- Trouble starting the stream of urine.
- Weak flow of urine.

The best treatment choice for you depends on: The size of your prostate, your age, your overall health, how serious your symptoms are, if your symptoms do not get in the way of your life, you might decide to put off treatment. Many treatments are available for enlarged prostate. These include medicines, surgery and procedures that involve smaller, fewer or no cuts.

Prostate Cancer

This is a malignancy of the prostate and is potentially life-threatening. The diagnosis is made on a blood test and a physical exam. If diagnosed early, the treatment options have truly advanced over the years. They include brachytherapy, surgery, radiation, medication either tablets or an injection, and finally chemotherapy for more advanced disease. You may be at a higher risk of developing prostate cancer if you:

- Are 50 years old or older.
- Have a close family member who has had breast, ovarian or prostate cancer.

Testosterone Deficiency Syndrome (TDS)

This is the male equivalent of menopause. Its other names are andropause and ADAM (androgen deficiency in the ageing male). This is a set of symptoms which males experience because of declining testosterone levels with increasing age. Again, this can be treated.

Symptoms of TDS:

- Erectile dysfunction.
- Loss of libido.
- Hair loss.
- Lethargy / Tiredness.
- Depressed mood.
- Lack of motivation.
- Decreased muscle and bone mass.
- Increase in fat especially centrally.
- Sleep disturbance.

Erectile Dysfunction and Cardiovascular Health

Erectile dysfunction, or ED, is a common reason men go to see their provider. However, many men may be surprised by the cause of their ED. “Men often see me for help with erectile dysfunction, not realizing it can be associated with heart and vascular disease”. Low testosterone levels are another reason for erectile dysfunction. If your testosterone levels are low, you may also experience:

- Fatigue.
- Hair loss.
- Weight gain.

All parts of the body are connected. To improve your heart health, mental health, prostate health, sexual health, and overall quality of life:

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Get enough exercise.
- Have a consistent sleep schedule.

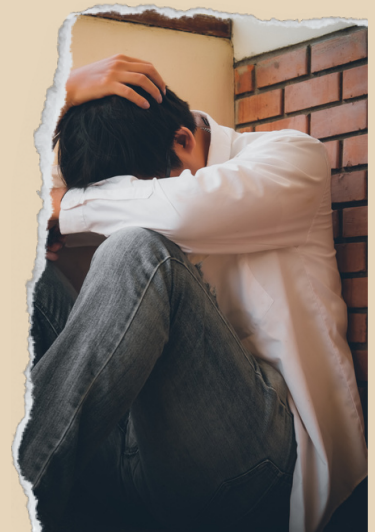


MENTAL HEALTH

Health is more than just physical. Mental health matters too. The reasons why men do not seek out care include a 'pick yourself up by the bootstraps' mentality, as well as persistent stigma towards mental health in our society.

Signs of an Anxiety Disorder May Include

- A sudden racing heartbeat for no known reason.
- Feeling fear or panic.
- Obsessive thoughts.
- Depression may cause:
 - Changes in your sleep patterns
 - Feeling sad or worthless
 - Loss of interest in your hobbies or other things you usually enjoy.
 - Low energy
 - Thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else
 - Weight gain or loss.



Dealing with mental health issues does not mean you are weak. It means you are human. Treatments are available to address and manage mental health problems. Speak up.



References

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