

Getting Men Invested In Their Health

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June is Men's Health Awareness Month

ALTON - Let's face it. Many men don't like dealing with health issues. They don't like talking about it, they tend to procrastinate when it comes to potential symptoms, and they really don't like visiting the doctor – it usually takes a persistent wife or significant other to even make the darn appointment.

June is National Men's Health Month. It's a time to encourage all men to take their health seriously, make necessary lifestyle changes and get reacquainted with their physician.

According to Dr. Mohammed Khan, a family practice physician with OSF HealthCare, the reasons vary. For some men, it's a macho thing. They don't need any help. For others, they don't want to make the time to address their health, and for others it's simply a case of 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it.'

"A lot of men don't feel like anything is wrong," Dr. Khan says. "'I'm doing fine. I'm feeling fine. I don't need to see a doctor.'"

But they do.

A few years ago, Cleveland Clinic surveyed men ages 18 to 70 across the country and found that only three in five men get an annual physical, and just over 40 % go to the doctor only when they fear they have a serious medical condition.

For starters, Dr. Khan recommends all men should have an annual physical to (using a car analogy) make sure all the parts under the hood are working efficiently. It's also the time to catch any potential problems.

"What we do during a wellness visit is to go over your entire history, address any questions or concerns, we do some basic bloodwork, check for diabetes, and check your cholesterol," Dr. Khan says. "I can tell you at least five or six patients every couple of months that I see, who haven't been seen in more than a year, I check them for diabetes and guess what? They have diabetes."

In addition to diabetes, men should have annual screenings for hypertension and cholesterol, as well as certain cancer screenings. Also, self-exam is important when it comes to issues such as testicular cancer, which is more than 90 % curable if caught early enough.

"For men the common screenings are colon cancer and prostate cancer screening," Dr. Khan says. "Colon cancer screening is typically age 50 and is repeated every five or 10 years, depending on what they see. In some cases where there is a family history of colon cancer, sometimes the screening will start at age 40, whereas prostate cancer screening will start at 46 or 47 and that's an annual screening."

Another issue affecting men is stress. Whether it is job or family related, or stems from health or financial issues, everyone has reason to worry from time to time. Dr. Khan recommends several options for dealing with anxiety, which if not handled properly, can cause major health problems.

"If you keep it inside you tend to get stressed out," he says. "There are a few ways to handle stress. You can go see a counselor or a therapist. There are some people who are

not open to discussing these things. What I tell them is to use exercise as a stress reliever. Go for a walk or a run or hit the gym every so often. That helps relieve the stress and anxiety.”

No one is invincible and problems are going to crop up at some point in our lives. The key, Dr. Khan says, is to take care of ourselves, listen to our bodies, and check in with the doctor at least once a year. It’s the least we can do not only for ourselves but our loved ones.

For more information on men’s health, click [here](#).

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