

# HOW TO SAVE A LIFE:

## Checkpoints to Men's Health for Women and Other Loved Ones

Many women often have concerns that the men in their lives – their partners, husbands, brothers, dads, sons and friends – sometimes are dismissive or reluctant to take charge of their own health and wellness and put off getting regular checkups or taking care of developing medical conditions or injuries quickly. These views are confusing and alarming to women. These poor health behaviors that all too many men have are contributors to the fact that men live almost 6 years shorter than do women, from manageable and preventable conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, cancers, work-injuries and suicides.

Sounds pretty grim, doesn't it? The good news is that half of male premature deaths are preventable. But to accomplish that, men will have to make some serious lifestyle changes—something too few are willing to do—in part because from the time we're little, we're raised up not to cry, complain, or show signs of weakness.

Part of the bad news in the poor health status of men is that it also has harmful effects on women. Because women live longer, they may see one of the men they care about suffer with a medical condition that could have been avoided or managed better earlier. These have both emotional and financial implications for women. Many women also must deal with the reality that a man important to them and their lives may die unnecessarily early which also has significant emotional and financial implications.



### Learn about Men's Health

Because they often skip routine medical appointments, many men never learn that they have a deadly disease until it's too late, because they and their wives don't know what signs to look for. When hearing the word "prostate," for example, many men's (and women's) first reaction is "What's that?" The prostate is a gland that's about the size and shape of a walnut. It's located in front of the rectum and manufactures fluid for semen. More than 200,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer every year. Caught early, through either a digital rectal exam (DRE) or a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test, this disease is nearly always curable. However, every year prostate cancer kills around 33,000 men—nearly the number of women who will die of breast cancer.

Testicular cancer is one of the most common cancers in men ages 15 to 35 and, like prostate cancer, has a very high cure rate if caught early. But too few men know that they should examine their testicles monthly, and even fewer know how to do these exams.



### Know the Warning Signs

- **Changes in bowel or bladder habits.** Does he get up five times a night to go to the bathroom? This can be an indication of bladder, colon or prostate problems.
- **Blood in the urine.** This can be a sign of severe kidney or other problems.
- **Impotence/erectile dysfunction.** An incredibly common—and potentially serious—condition that men generally fail to discuss with their doctors. More than half the time, impotence is the result of a physical problem: atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, diabetes, or low testosterone levels. So if you want to make love and your husband says that he has a headache, pay attention: It might be an indication of something more serious.
- **Persistent backaches, changes in the color of urine or stool, obvious changes in warts or moles, recurrent chest pains or headaches, bleeding that won't stop, nagging cough, unexplained weight loss, and extreme fatigue.** Any of these may signal a serious health problem. Insist that your partner get to the doctor immediately—and don't take no for an answer.





## Check Him Out

Somewhere along the line we got the idea that self-exams had to be done, well, by ourselves. Yet, there's no reason why he can't help you with your monthly breast exams or you with his testicular exams.

While you're at it, do a head-to-toe skin cancer check on one another. Women tend to get skin cancers on their hands, face and legs; men get them on their backs, where they can't see them.



## Get Him to the Doctor

One of the most important steps you can take is to get your man (and boys) into the habit of regular check-ups. Changes over time are key in assessing health.

Encourage them to make their own appointments, but if they won't, do it yourself. Don't worry, you won't be alone. Doctors we've spoken with say that at least 25% of the appointments for male patients are made by women.

A week or so before his physical (if it's his first in a while or with a new doctor), go over his family medical history, note any symptoms you or he are worried about, and encourage him to write down a list of questions he will want to ask the doctor.



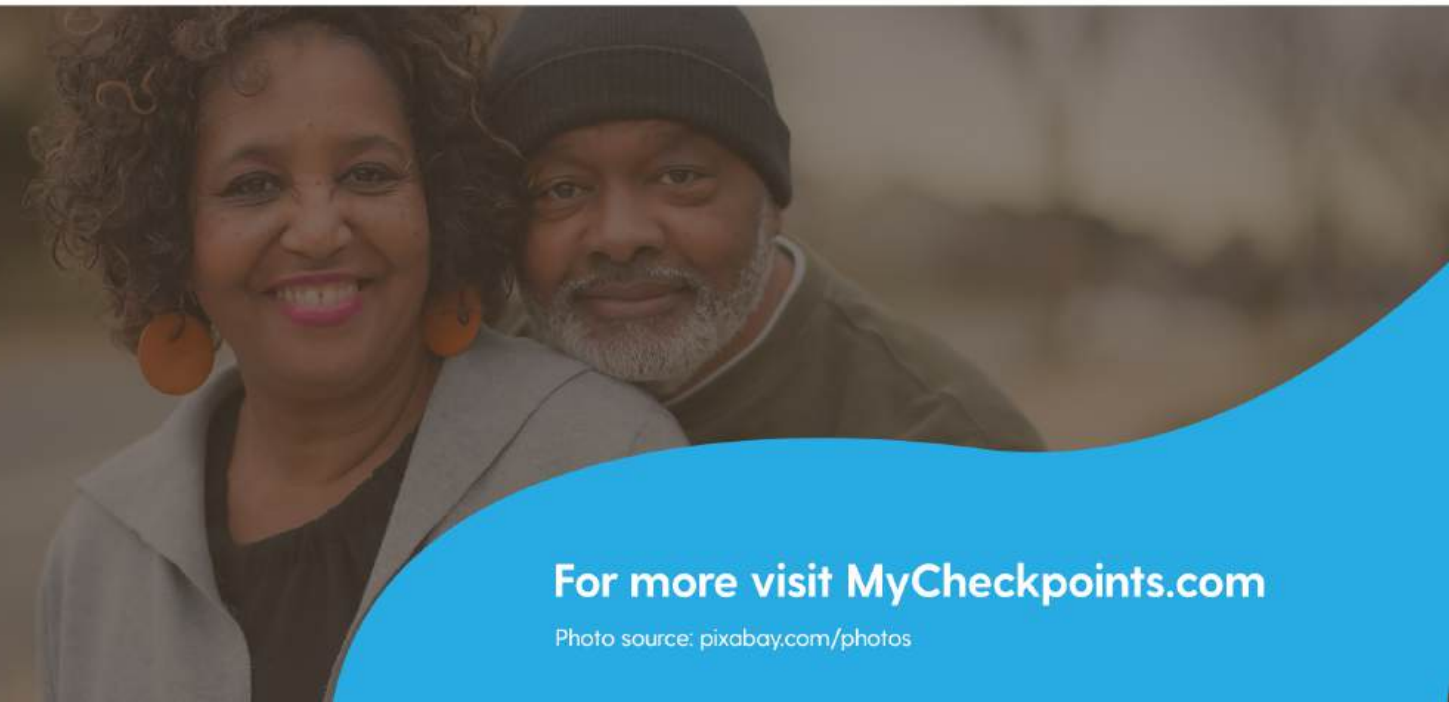
## Promote a Healthy Lifestyle

This probably won't come as a big surprise to you: The three most effective things you can do for the men in your life (and for yourself, for that matter) are to put them on a low-fat, high-fiber diet, help them get regular exercise, and get them to quit smoking. These steps can drastically reduce the chances that they'll succumb to the leading causes of death: heart and pulmonary diseases, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.



## Be Patient

Your goal is to get the men in your life to take better care of themselves—and to get the next generation of men to start building good habits. These things take time. But with each small change you'll improve the quality and increase the length of the life you have with the boys and men you love.



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