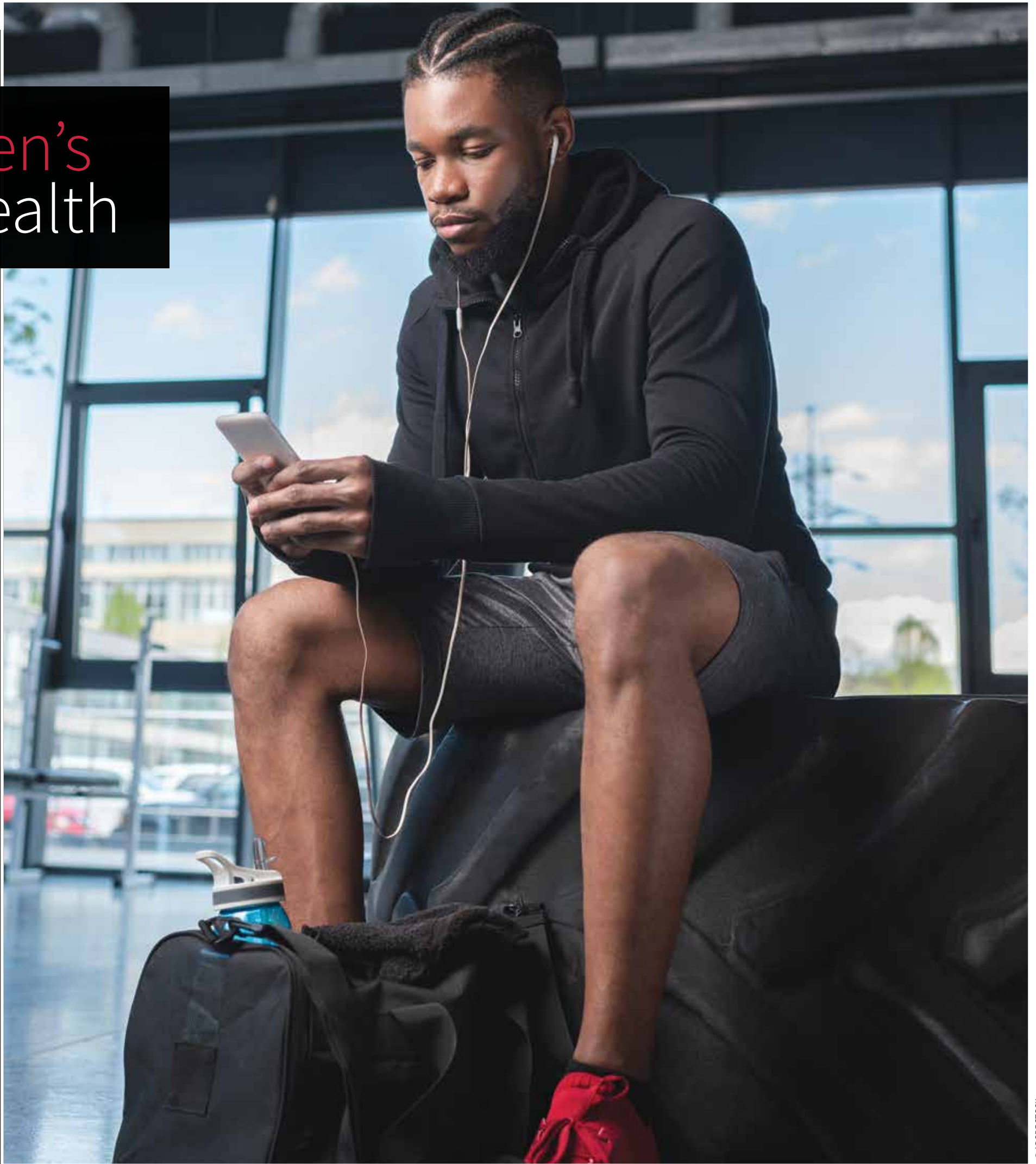


# Men's Health



# Cardiovascular Health

Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death among American men. Here's how to avoid becoming a statistic:

## INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Some 357,761 men died of heart disease in 2019, according to the CDC, or about one in every four U.S. males. It's the leading cause of death across all racial and ethnic groups, except for Asian American men. (Heart disease is their second-leading cause of death, after cancer.) Half of these men died suddenly, with no previous reported issues. So even those with no symptoms could still be at risk. Regular screenings and behavioral changes can have a huge impact on these numbers.

## SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Heart disease is largely preventable in younger patients, so the American Heart Association recommends beginning regular screenings at 20 years old. Whatever your age, the doctor will analyze certain factors to determine your risk. Regular monitoring of your blood pressure is crucial, since there aren't often noticeable symptoms. Have your cholesterol checked every four to six years, since levels that are too high — or too low — can be dangerous. Diabetes also impacts heart



© ADOBE STOCK

health, so have glucose levels checked every three years beginning at age 45.

## MAKE A CHANGE

There are several heart-healthy life choices that you can make and see almost immediate results. The American Heart Association notes that those who smoke

are up to four times more likely to develop heart issues, when compared with non-smokers. Physical activity is critical, whether it's something as intense as weight training or as casual as a walking regimen. Excess body fat, in particular along the waist, has been linked to cardiovascular issues. Avoid fatty and sugary

foods. Healthy diets provide a terrific defense against heart disease. Finally, limit how much you drink. Excessive alcohol use is also a risk factor.

## RISK FACTORS

Unfortunately, in some cases, proactive measures like these only go so far. Heart disease and hypertension can be

genetic. Men are at greater risk of having a heart attack, and are more likely to have one at a younger age. Aging also increases your risk: About 80% of those who die from cardiovascular diseases are 65 and older. Lifestyle changes and the right medication can lower the odds and extend your life.

# How to Manage a Migraine

Migraines can knock you offline for hours, even days. Here are some tips on managing the pain.

## YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Headaches impacted up to three quarters of adults age 18-65 over the last year, according to the World Health Organization. Thirty percent of those headache sufferers reported having a migraine. As many as 4% of the world's entire adult population had a headache on 15 or more days a month. The WHO also reports that migraines are the sixth-highest cause of time lost to disability worldwide.

## AVOID TRIGGERS

Just as most migraines are centered in one place, they typically are sparked by single identifiable triggers. Work hard to avoid every-day incidents like bright lights, dehydration and strong smells that might lead to a migraine. Chronic sufferers can make other small lifestyle changes that could have a huge impact, too. Try to stay on a schedule, since routines tend to lessen stress — and nothing sparks a headache faster than stress. Get more sleep, and try to avoid quick movements or any activity that might lead to motion sickness.

## BE PREPARED

Sometimes there's nothing



© ADOBE STOCK

you can do, as with a common trigger like weather changes. Still, once your specific triggers are identified, then you can better prepare for them — whether they're within your control or not. If you have pain-relief medication, keep that at the ready. Should you experience a triggering moment, try lessening

the general sensory input that surrounds you. That might mean shutting your office or bedroom door to limit sounds, or closing the blinds or dimming lights to cut down on general brightness.

## ALTERNATE THERAPIES

If nothing else seems to work, you might consider

alternative therapies like acupuncture, meditation or personal actions like lying down in a cool darkened room, deep breathing and relaxation techniques, or applying cold compresses.

Those who added yoga to a medicinal regimen had fewer or less-intense migraines than people who did not,

according to a study shared by WebMD. If you decide to try vitamins or any other supplement, make sure to discuss it with your physician beforehand, and make sure they conform with any previous prescription plan.

Your doctor may also have their own recommendations for alternative therapies you

# The Role of Testosterone

Testosterone has gotten a bad rap, as it's linked most often these days to aggression in men. But it's actually crucial to good health.

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

The hormone testosterone develops in the testicles and is required for male development. The hypothalamus and pituitary glands help regulate levels. Beyond impacting men's physical appearance by encouraging the build up of muscle mass, testosterone aids with fat distribution and producing red-blood cells and sperm. It also helps men grow body hair, maintain regular sleep and keep strong bones, while playing an important role in battling depression. Testosterone levels begin to drop as men move through their 30s and 40s, though some suffer prematurely from lower numbers. That might be the result of unexpected side effects from prescriptions or other medicines, obesity, injuries to the testicle or issues with the glands that control testosterone production.

## WHEN LEVELS ARE OFF

If you have too much testosterone, the testicles may shrink, leading to reduced fertility. Levels most commonly move in this direction among men who use anabol-



© ADOBE STOCK

ic steroids. Stubborn acne may appear on the shoulders and back, and there is the possibility of hair loss. Besides those commonly understood side effects, anabolic steroids are also very harmful to the liver and heart. If you're living with too little testosterone, on the other hand, you may notice both an increase in body fat

and the loss of muscle. Low levels also put men at risk of developing osteoporosis. Many suffer from depression. Certain lifestyle changes can help increase your testosterone, including expanding your exercise regimen and dropping some pounds. Lifting weights has been linked to temporary increases, though that's more often

the case with younger men.

## TALK TO A PHYSICIAN

Simple blood tests can determine how much testosterone is present. A doctor will then lay out treatment options if your levels are not where they need to be. Treatments for low testosterone include hormone therapy, where man-made testos-

terone is injected into your body to make up for what's missing. This may happen via an injection, a topical gel or a skin patch. The therapy isn't without risk, however, as it can increase your chances of having a stroke or heart attack. Men living with prostate cancer may also be encouraged to look for alternate treatments.

# Caffeine and You

Many American men turn to caffeine to help boost themselves physically and mentally. Here are some other documented side effects to know.

## MEMORY AID

Roughly 80% of U.S. adults ingest some form of caffeine daily, according to the Food and Drug Administration. The awakening effects impact our nervous systems immediately, peaking within about an hour of consumption, the Harvard Medical School reports. But that's not the only reaction: Consuming a recommended amount of caffeine can also help fight off dementia, according to a study by the *Journal of Gerontology*. Surveyed adults age 65 and older who ingested two to three eight-ounce coffees daily for a decade experienced fewer symptoms of memory loss. Those who drank half a cup or less reported more dementia symptoms. Harvard researchers also determined that men who drink four coffees daily were half as likely to develop Parkinson's disease.

## HEART IMPACTS

Unfortunately, caffeine can have a negative impact on your heart health. Reactions can vary quite dramatically across a wide enough subsec-

tion of men, but certain general facts have been confirmed. High doses may temporarily elevate your heart rate and blood pressure, a worrisome situation for anyone who already suffers from cardiopulmonary diseases. But the *Journal of the American Heart Association* notes that regular coffee consumption for healthy people does not typi-

cally lead to irregular rhythm patterns. (Your body has eliminated as much as half its caffeine intake within a time frame of four to six hours.) While caffeine unquestionably raises our blood pressure, *Men's Health* reports that regular drinkers are half as apt to die from heart failure as anyone who doesn't partake in a daily coffee regimen.

## MANAGING YOUR INTAKE

If you're worried about the impact caffeine might be having on your cardiovascular system, consult a physician and be honest about how much you're drinking in order to maintain your hectic schedule. They will be able to give you more information on how to manage consumption

of things like coffee in order to ensure the health of your body and heart. The AMA urges caffeine users to avoid super-charged energy drinks. They cause more abnormal electrocardiograms than black coffee and various teas. Limit added sugars or cream in your coffee, since they are typically home to lots of hidden calories.





# Rest Is Part of Good Health, Too

© ADOBE STOCK

The culture has begun to question sleep, as if resting is a sign of laziness. Instead, it's one of the most important things men can do to maintain good health.

## **MEN SLEEP LESS**

Statistics consistently show that men get fewer hours of sleep, and experience lower-quality rest, than women. Lighter sleep is often to blame, but many report that they simply sleep less than women. Work obligations, stress or physical issues like sleep apnea are commonly cited. Unfortunately, these poor sleep habits are directly linked to lower quality of life and many health issues. If you're

finding it difficult to go to sleep — or to stay asleep — it's time to consider a change in your habits.

## **HEALTH IMPACTS**

Chronic loss of sleep increases your risk for heart issues, stroke, high blood pressure and diabetes. It also decreases your mental sharpness and cognitive ability — meaning the longer you stay up working, the worse your work product might be. You're at

risk of decreased alertness and reasoning skills, which can have catastrophic results in our every-day lives. Sleep deprivation was a factor, for instance, in the Exxon Valdez oil spill and nuclear mishaps at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island. Fatigue similarly plays a huge role in accidents and death on our roads. It can also negatively impact your appearance, both in terms of skin health and weight gain, as well as your love life.

## **GET BACK ON TRACK**

Developing a regularly scheduled bedtime can help reset your body's internal clock. Try creating an evening ritual that encourages rest. Avoid late-

night food and drinks, and limit screen time just before tucking yourself in. Phones and laptops tend to stimulate our brains, discouraging sleep. Turn everything off at least 30 minutes before bedtime. Meanwhile, getting as little as 150 minutes of exercise per week, even if it's moderate in intensity, improved sleep quality by 65 percent in one study. That's less than 20 minutes per day, or three sessions of less than an hour a week. You'll be healthier, while also releasing the kind of negative energy that we often describe as stress. If your sleep issues continue, consult with medical professionals about other forms of therapy.

# Focus on the Prostate

Prostate cancer can be a silent killer of men, but it's so slow to develop that the disease can usually be caught early. The key is getting a regular exam.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

This walnut-sized gland sits just below the bladder, where it produces the fluid that combines with sperm to create semen. More than 190,000 new cases of prostate cancer are reported in the U.S. each year, according to the American Cancer Society. Scientists haven't yet directly pinpointed what causes it — but there are successful treatments in place, if detected early. Your risks are elevated with age. The average of diagnosed men is 66, according to the American Cancer Society. Six in 10 of those with prostate cancer are 65 and older. So, annual prostate exams are encouraged for men once they reach 50. Those at a higher risk should start earlier, including men with several close relatives who have suffered from the disease.

## WHAT HAPPENS

Prostate cancer is now the most common cancer among men in America, behind only skin cancer. About one in eight men will be positively diagnosed, the American Cancer



© ADOBE STOCK

Society says. Life-saving screenings for this form of cancer are done in one of two ways. A prostate-specific blood test has been developed to check your antigen levels. Men are told not to exercise heavily or ejaculate for 48 hours prior to testing so doctors don't get an inaccurate reading. Digital rectal exams are more common, as physi-

cians evaluate the size of the prostate and any possible abnormalities like hard spots, lumps or growths. Neither test will confirm the presence of prostate cancer, but they provide important indicators so a medical professional knows whether to order a biopsy.

## TREATMENT OPTIONS

Doctors attack this form of

cancer through chemotherapy and radiation, and in some cases vaccines or surgery.

Decisions about which treatment option the patient is best suited for will be made based on the stage of detected cancer and the patient's age.

You can lower your risk of prostate cancer by living a healthier lifestyle. Focus on

eating so-called "superfoods," which contain antioxidants that inhibit cancer. They include kale, Brussels sprouts and broccoli.

Red vegetables and fruits, which get their color from lycopene, can also have positive benefits. They are said to destroy free radicals that attempt to attach to cells, damaging the immune system.

# Why Exercise Is So Important

With so many work and family obligations, it's easy to keep putting off exercise. Here's why you shouldn't let that happen.

## NOT ACTIVE ENOUGH

Physical activity is a key defense against heart disease and stroke, according to the American Heart Association. But exercise does more than improve your physical health: It can also boost confidence and lessen stress. Walking for as little as an hour a day, or running for 15 minutes daily, was linked to reduced depression in one study. Moods are lifted after only five minutes of activity, the American Psychological Association reports. In total, active people have more than 40% fewer poor mental-health days per year, according to the Lancet. Yet government statistics show that just 24.2% of men took part in exercise, sports and recreational activities combined on any given day in 2020.

## INSIDE THE GUIDELINES

A total of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise is the standard recommendation for each week. That's defined by the Centers for Disease Control as working hard enough that it's difficult to sing a song. Common examples would be bike riding,



© ADOBE STOCK

walking fast or water aerobics. Heartier types can instead choose to take part in 75 minutes of vigorous activity for the best health benefits. You should be breathing too quickly to say any more than a few words without inhaling. In this instance, you might play tennis or basketball, or running

or jogging. But just 40 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous aerobic exercise three or four times a week leads to huge improvements in cholesterol levels and blood pressure.

## START A NEW ROUTINE

Whatever form of exercise you choose, it's important to

begin slowly — in particular if you have been leading a more sedentary lifestyle. The risk of injury and burn out is greatest as your health journey is just beginning. Start by setting aside five minutes per work day, then add more time every week for a month. As your body adjusts, shift your

20-minute regimen to 30 minutes as you go into week five. By strategically stair-stepping your exercise routine, you will reach a full hour in just two months — and you'll feel better while you're doing it. If you can't spare an unbroken hour, split up your routine throughout the day.