

Live Healthy Georgia— Seniors Taking Charge **Men's Health**

June 2011 Newsletter
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June is Men's Health Month! In this newsletter, we will focus on several chronic conditions that men face as they age.

Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among men and women worldwide, and it has been identified as the leading men's health threat in the United States. Risk factors include tobacco use; diets high in saturated fats, cholesterol, salt, or sodium; physical inactivity; obesity; excessive alcohol intake (more than two drinks a day for men); high LDL cholesterol and triglycerides; high blood pressure; uncontrolled diabetes mellitus; and genetics. By maintaining a healthy diet and regular physical activity, avoiding tobacco use, controlling your chronic conditions, and reducing your stress levels, you can lower your risks of heart disease.

Cancer

Cancer is a group of diseases in which the body's cells grow out of control and can cause illness and death if not treated. The types of cancer that are of particular

concern to men include lung, skin, prostate, and colorectal cancers. To



reduce your risk of these cancers, do not use tobacco products, go to your doctor for regular health screens, and protect your skin from the sun. Also, if a certain type of cancer runs in your family, be sure to

communicate with your healthcare provider.

Stroke

A stroke happens when a clot blocks blood supply to the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. This can permanently damage parts of your brain and lead to disability and even death. Your risk of stroke increases as you age, and men are more likely to have strokes than women. Also, Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indian/Alaskan Natives have a greater risk of stroke than non-Hispanic whites or Asians do. Other risk factors for stroke include family history, tobacco and alcohol use, physical inactivity, high blood pressure and cholesterol, heart disease, uncontrolled diabetes, overweight and obesity, a previous stroke, or sickle cell disease.

Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases

These diseases are chronic bronchitis and emphysema (also called chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases) and asthma. With chronic bronchitis and emphysema, breathing progressively gets more difficult, and individuals may cough up large amounts of mucus, wheeze, and have chest tightness and other symptoms. Risk factors for bronchitis and emphysema include tobacco smoking, environmental exposures, and genetics. With asthma, individuals also experience shortness of breath and may wheeze, have chest tightness, and experience frequent coughing. For asthma, genetics strongly contribute to the disease, and individuals with allergies are more likely to have the disease.

Alzheimer's Disease

With this disease, a loss of brain function occurs, called dementia. Individuals' memory, language, thinking, ability to make decisions, and personality are impaired. As you age, your risk increases; however, the disease is not a part of normal aging. Although men are less likely to develop Alzheimer's than women, men still do get the disease. There is currently no proven way to prevent Alzheimer's, although if you have a known family history of the disease, speak with your healthcare provider about medications that may prevent it. Also, a healthy diet that includes fruits, vegetables, and cold-water fish may be beneficial.

Diabetes Mellitus

Diabetes is when your blood glucose (sugar) levels are higher than normal.

Older adults are more likely to develop diabetes because the aging body gradually makes less insulin, which is needed to use energy from the food that you eat. Individuals with diabetes may have frequent urination, excessive thirst, hunger, fatigue, or tingling in the hands or feet. In addition to age, obesity, physical inactivity, family history, and race/ethnicity are also risk factors.

Take Charge of Your Health

A good general guideline to reduce your risk of most chronic diseases is to make healthier choices on a daily basis. Aim to eat a healthy diet with vegetables, fruits, whole grains, high-fiber foods, and lean proteins. Also, manage chronic conditions and schedule regular check-ups with your healthcare providers, especially if you have any of the symptoms listed above. Be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day, and try to manage your stress. Always remember that your health is a journey, not a destination!

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