

What to Know

The health of our nation's men is in crisis! On balance, men are far and away worse off than women when it comes to health outcomes.

Think about these facts. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Men live an average of five years less than do women.
- The death rate for men (per 100,000) is higher than women for 9 of the 10 leading causes of death, including suicide (nearly 4 times higher for men).
- 92 percent of work-related deaths strike men.
- Men die from drug overdoses at a rate of 18.3 (per 100,000) compared to 11.1 for women.
- 70 percent of deaths from alcohol are among men.
- More men than women use alcohol, binge drink, and drink heavily.
- More men than women are obese.



The picture of health for men of color is worse than it is for white men.

- The life expectancy for black men is 7 years less than it is for white men.
- The death rate for black men is higher than the death rate for American men of other races and ethnicities.
- Compared with white men, Hispanic and Native American men lose more years of potential life to chronic liver disease or cirrhosis of the liver, diabetes, and homicide.
- The death rate, however, for white men, from all causes combined, is higher than it is for any other racial or ethnic group, except for black men.

What does this crisis have to do with being a dad? A lot!

Your physical, emotional, and spiritual health affects your ability to become the best dad you can be. The time that your children have with you can be cut short if you die from poor health. And the time you spend with your children can compete with unhealthy behavior, such as if you abuse alcohol or drugs.

Many men deny the signs of poor health. They think it's a sign of weakness to seek help for their health. This denial can lead men to avoid help for so long that, by the time they seek help; it's often too late to reverse illness.

Don't be one of those men. It's vital that you assess your health. If you're in poor health in any way, take action now to improve it. **If you haven't had a check-up in a while, schedule one right away. If you don't do it for yourself, do it for your children.**

What Else

Learn the basics of taking care of your physical health, and make them habits. The basics are eating healthy, working out, and getting enough sleep.

Go to the doctor for yearly check-ups and when sick.

Reduce your stress. Stress can cause emotional distress. Chronic stress has been linked to physical illness, including cancer.

Balance work and family life. Many dads feel stressed because they're torn between work and family. You'll learn more about how to balance work and family in the "Work-Family Balance" topic.

Join a community of faith. Connecting with other people who have a similar faith is one of the best ways to care for your emotional and spiritual health.

Join or start a support group or network for dads. This is another good way to care for your emotional and spiritual health. It helps when you can share with and listen to other dads. You can get things off your chest and learn a lot from other dads in a safe space. A group or network of dads can greatly reduce your stress.

What to Ask

Reflect on each of the questions below. Take your time. Write your answers if you like.

1. How well do I care for my physical health? When was the last time I had a check-up?
2. Have I had physical problems for a while, such as aches and pains, that won't go away and that I should get checked out?
3. What is the health history of my family, both on my mom and dad's sides? What does this history tell me I should watch out for, such as heart disease or cancer?
4. Do I have a lot of stress in my life? Do I always feel stressed out? Do I deal with my stress in unhealthy ways, such as drink alcohol or become angry and yell at family members?
5. How can I reduce my stress in healthy ways? Do I need to do a better job at balancing work and family?

Learn More

Use these 15 tips to reduce your stress and care for your health.

1. **Work Out.** Working out increases your strength and stamina. Work out with a friend.
2. **Eat Right.** Stress and diet are closely linked. You know what you should eat. The key is eating it and not settling for unhealthy, fast foods. It's okay to have a treat now and then, but you need to eat healthy every day.
3. **Treat Your Body Well.** Your body sends signals when under stress, such as a racing heart rate, headaches, a stiff neck or shoulders, and other aches and pains. Get a massage, rubdown, or take a hot bath to treat your body well and reduce stress.
4. **Learn to Relax.** There are many simple ways to relax. Take slow, deep breaths into your belly. Find a quiet spot to slow down and think. Go for a long walk by the lake. Do something that takes you away from the pressure of every day life and do it often.
5. **Get Enough Sleep.** Get at least six to eight hours of sleep a night. Take naps during the day if you can't get enough sleep. Even "power naps"—15 to 30 minutes of rest where you close your eyes—help reduce stress and improve your work.
6. **Be Flexible.** Be less rigid and competitive. Be more patient.

7. **Build Self-Worth.** The “Family History” topic has some tips to get rid of the bad messages you send yourself and how to replace them with good messages. Doing so reduces your stress.
8. **Get Real.** Think about all the “shoulds,” “woulds,” “coulds,” and “musts” in your life. Figure out which are worth keeping and which to get rid of.
9. **Be Happy.** This is easier said than done. Try to look at the good instead of the bad in the world. Don’t complain about stuff.
10. **Laugh and Have Fun.** Laugh and have fun with your children, family members, others, and yourself. A sense of humor goes a long way in reducing stress.
11. **Get Rid of Clutter.** Life can get so busy that it gets out of hand. Make a list of things you need to do, in order of importance, and knock them out. Don’t worry about the small stuff. Leave it alone and focus on what’s most important. Clean your office, garage, and anything else that’s messy.
12. **Leave Work at Work.** Get away from work and leave it behind. Bringing your work home is a sure way to stress yourself and your family. Keep in mind that you can bring work home in your head as well as in your hands. Leave your thoughts of work at the door and focus on your family.
13. **Spend Time with Friends.** Friends have a way of making things seem better. They can help you get real and tell you when you’re full of it. If you have a choice to spend a night alone or with friends, choose friends. If you don’t have a lot of friends, make some.
14. **Volunteer.** Helping others is a good way to reduce stress because it builds self-worth. When you help someone in worse shape than you are, it has a way of showing you that your life isn’t as bad as you think.
15. **Find a Hobby.** A hobby can help you get away from life’s pressures and relax. A hobby helps you focus your time and energy on something you really enjoy. A hobby you do with others, such as your children or friends, has added benefits.