**Five health checks men should be doing regularly**

*It’s a fact: health screening saves lives. That’s because it is easier to deal with health issues if they are picked up in the early stages of onset.*

We’ve listed five simple checks men should add to their routine to ramp up early detection of health conditions.

**Health check #1: Get screened for diabetes**

Diabetes is a serious condition caused by high blood sugar levels, that can cause damage to your eyes, heart and feet. When you have diabetes, your **pancreas doesn’t release enough insulin to turn glucose in the blood into fuel for the body**. “In men, type 2 diabetes is more frequently diagnosed at a lower age and in those with a lower body mass index than in women. Obesity, which is the most prominent risk factor, is also less common in men than in women,” says Dr Sarah Brewer, a registered nutritionist and nutritional therapist, and author of more than 70 health books. The reasons for this discrepancy are not fully understood and often give men a false sense of security.

It is important to get screened for diabetes if you haven’t had a check-up in the last few years. You could also get your blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked at the same time. [**Vitality**](https://www.vitalityhealthinternational.com/d2hp/vhi/ui/vitality-article/8) **Health Checks** can help spot early signs of serious conditions such as stroke, kidney disease, type 2 diabetes and dementia.

**Health check #2: Catch prostate cancer early**

Prostate cancer usually starts without any symptoms, making it **difficult to diagnose**. Men aged over 50 (over 45 if there’s a history of prostate cancer in the family) have the highest risk of prostate cancer. The earlier you catch it, the more likely you are to survive it.

Positioned under the bladder, the prostate gland surrounds the urethra (the tube that carries urine) and naturally grows bigger as you get older. This enlargement squeezes the urethra and interferes with the urinary flow. As you grow older you may find that you:

1. Rush to the toilet more often
2. Urinate more frequently
3. Start and stop in mid-flow
4. Dribble urine
5. Have a sensation of not fully emptying your bladder
6. Feel discomfort when you urinate.

“Prostate cancer can produce some of these symptoms, too,” explains Dr Brewer. “Don’t assume that any urinary problems are due to the benign enlargement of the prostate gland – see your doctor if you develop any of these symptoms.”

Try this [prostate cancer risk checker](https://prostatecanceruk.org/risk-checker) to find out if you are in one of the main risk groups. If you are, or have any symptoms, ask your doctor about the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test, which checks if you have higher than normal levels of the PSA protein in the blood. Raised PSA levels can also be caused by other conditions, and the PSA test may not catch all cancers, so you’ll need further invasive testing (a biopsy) to know for sure.

**Health check #3: Check your waist, not your weight**

You can find out if you’re a healthy weight for your height by [checking your body mass index](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator/) (BMI). However, you can’t tell from your BMI if you’re carrying too much fat because it doesn’t differentiate between fat, muscle and bone. This means you also need to check your **waist measurement.**

Men are naturally designed to hold less fat than women, but they tend to store excess fat around their waist and become ‘apple-shaped’ because of the hormone testosterone. Having an [apple shape](https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/mars-vs-venus-the-gender-gap-in-health) significantly increases your risk of type 2 diabetes, hypertension, unwanted blood clots, coronary heart disease and stroke. A [man’s waist should measure](https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/heart-matters-magazine/medical/measuring-your-waist) less than 94 cm to be healthy. If your waist measures more than this, make an appointment with your doctor to check your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

Being an apple shape may be a visible sign of fat in the body, what about the fat you can’t see? Visceral fat is found inside the body, wrapped around your vital organs, and is [far more common in men than women.](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6906176/) “Visceral fat secretes hormones, free fatty acids and inflammatory substances that pass into the circulation and are taken to the liver,” explains Dr Brewer. “In the circulation, these substances promote hardening of the arteries and cause a rise in blood pressure. In the liver, these substances stimulate the production of excess cholesterol, triglycerides and glucose.”

However, according to Dr Brewer, even a modest weight loss will improve your blood fats, lower blood pressure and generally improve your health and quality of life.

**Health check #4: Understand your heart health**

Men [are more likely to have heart failure](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14622644/) than women and tend to be younger when diagnosed. This online [heart health check](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-health-check/check-your-heart-age-tool/) can give you an idea of what your heart age is compared to your real age. Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables, with only the occasional consumption of red meat, not smoking and regular aerobic exercise will help to keep your heart healthy.

**Health check #5: Treat ‘male menopause’**

Although menopause is a female condition, an estimated 6 to 12% of men aged 40 to 70 have [testosterone deficiency syndrome](https://medichecks.com/blogs/male-hormone/low-testosterone-and-hypogonadism-symptoms-causes-and-treatment) (TDS). TDS increases the risk of several health problems, including heart disease and type 2 diabetes. “Symptoms include a reduced sex drive, erectile difficulties, loss of early-morning erections, mood swings and difficulties in concentrating and thinking straight, as well as a lack of energy and sleep problems,” explains Dr Brewer.

“It’s important to see your doctor if you are experiencing two or more of these symptoms, especially if your muscle bulk is shrinking while your waistline is expanding.” While simple steps such as losing weight, increasing exercise, reducing stress and heavy alcohol consumption, or stopping a medication may help, treatment with testosterone replacement therapy may be needed to get you back to normal.