## HEY MAN!

You've laughed, loved, won, and lost but one thing you never want to lose is your health. The human body is a durable machine. It operates without interruption, day after day, year after year.

Are you taking the right steps to give your body the attention it needs and deserves and keep this vital machine as healthy as possible through mid-life and beyond?

MEN'S HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK
JUNE
10 - 16 June 2024

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE...

A lot of middle-aged men assume that their past lifestyle choices have already sealed their fate, and that it's too late to benefit from lifestyle changes. *That's not true.*

Research has shown that our bodies have powerful recuperative powers. You can change your fate by choosing how you live the last half of your life and make "middle age" a new start.

You can't control your age or your family history but you *can* change whether you smoke or not, what you eat and drink –and how active you are.

Key risk factors for heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, kidney disease and most types of cancer that you *can* control:

- Kick the smoking habit once and for all
- Get your blood pressure and cholesterol checked annually so that you keep within healthy limits
- Become physically active
- Improve your diet.

Worried about Alzheimer's? Do all of the above plus:

- Avoid diabetes
- Wear a helmet while riding a bike or playing football or rugby.

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# YOU'RE NOT ALONE...

Some of the most bothersome health problems that start occurring in middle age are unique to men because they originate in a man's genitourinary system.

The urinary and sexual organs are located close together and share nerves and blood vessels—which helps explain why a problem in one may affect the other.

The bladder is just above the prostate (the small gland that produces semen). The prostate wraps around the upper part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the body.

Nearby are the fine mesh of nerves and blood vessels that supply the penis and enable erections.

The intertwined tissues help explain why certain prostate problems and treatment can affect urination and sexual function.

## PROSTATE

As a man ages, his prostate grows larger. this natural enlargement is called benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH).

Symptoms of BPH include leaking and dribbling urine, a weak or hesitant stream, and more frequent need to urinate, especially at night.

As the prostate enlarges, it starts to press against the urethra and the bladder, gradually obstructing the flow of urine, forcing the bladder to work harder to push urine through the urethra. But straining to urinate, although unavoidable, only makes matters worse.

Like any muscle, the bladder wall becomes thicker with work. This reduces the amount of urine the bladder can hold and causes it to contract even when it contains only small amounts of urine, causing more frequent urination. Eventually, the bladder becomes so thick that it loses its elasticity and can no longer empty itself.
If you experience the symptoms of BPH, see your doctor.

## ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

Erections depend on a complex interaction between nerves, chemical messengers like nitric oxide, and sufficient blood supply to the penis.

As a man ages, and especially if he has heart disease or another problem that damages his blood vessels, he is more likely to have problems having a firm erection.

Erectile dysfunction may also develop as a consequence of medications he is taking or as a result of surgery or radiation for prostate cancer. Fortunately, there are treatments that can alleviate erectile dysfunction.

To diagnose erectile dysfunction, your doctor will ask about your symptoms and do a physical exam.

You will probably fill out a questionnaire and answer questions about your sexual history, medical conditions, and any medications that you take. Next, your doctor may run tests to better understand what's happening physiologically.

## LOW TESTOSTERONE

Testosterone is the hormone that gives men their "manly" qualities, such as a deep voice, large muscles, facial and body hair.

It stimulates the growth of genitals at puberty, plays a role in sperm production, fuels libido, and contributes to erections.

It also fosters the production of red blood cells, boosts mood, helps keeps bones strong, and aids thinking ability cognition).

Over time, however, the testicular "machinery" that makes testosterone gradually becomes less effective, and testosterone levels start to fall by about 1% to 2% a year beginning in the 40s.

As men get into their 50s and beyond, they may start to have signs and symptoms of low testosterone, such as lower sex drive and sense of vitality, decreased energy, reduced muscle mass and bone density, and anemia.

But it's not only a question of age. A man's health also affects his testosterone levels. Obesity, diabetes, thyroid problems, and certain medications (such as steroids) can all play a role.

A diagnosis of low testosterone is made on the basis of a physical exam, symptoms, and the results of one or more blood tests to measure levels of testosterone and other male hormones.

If you once sported a full head of hair and now find yourself staring at a receding hairline and signs of male pattern balding, you might wonder if low testosterone is to blame. The answer is, partially. While low testosterone levels can contribute to hair thinning or loss, so can excessively high levels.

Testosterone isn't exclusive to men. Women also produce testosterone, although in much smaller quantities. It contributes to muscle strength, bone density, and overall female well-being.

Testosterone is often associated with physical characteristics, but its influence extends beyond muscles and hair. It is crucial in maintaining bone density, red blood cell production, and even cognitive function.

Adequate levels of this hormone are essential for a man's overall health and well-being. When researchers monitored the health of men ages 40 to 70 for 9 years, they found that the men who became overweight or obese experienced a more rapid drop in testosterone than those who'd kept a normal weight.

Regular exercise, a balanced diet, quality sleep, stress management, and maintaining a healthy weight are all factors that can support optimal hormone levels. Instead of relying on quick fixes or questionable supplements, focus on adopting a holistic approach to your overall well-being.

*Further reading here: Anabolic Steroids and unveiling the dangers*