

Men are living longer than ever before. Still not quite as long as woman, but the older men amongst you are certainly working on it! It's vitally important to look after your health as you get older.

The major health issues faced by men aged 50 plus include:

01

Prostate problems

Prostate cancer is one of the most common types of cancer among men. Of all the men who are diagnosed with cancer each year, about one-third have prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer occurs when the cells of the prostate begin to grow uncontrollably. When caught and treated early, prostate cancer has a cure rate of over 90%.

Yet being diagnosed with prostate cancer can be a life-altering experience. It requires making some very difficult decisions about treatments that can affect not only the life of the man diagnosed, but also the lives of his family members in significant ways for many years to come.

02

Depression

Depression affects 1 in 6 men. Most don't seek help. Untreated depression is a leading risk factor for suicide. Suicide is the major killer of young men. Depression is a very common illness that can affect anyone, male or female, of any age and at almost any time. It's more than feeling blue or down in the dumps for a few days. Depression is a longer-lasting condition that can, in many cases, completely dominate daily life.

03

Cancer

One in three people will get cancer at some time in their lives, and one in four will die from the disease.

Cancer develops when one or more cells in the body begin to divide abnormally. Usually cells only divide to replace those that have died, but sometimes something goes wrong and a single cell multiplies into a lump or tumour. Not all of these lumps are particularly dangerous. Many are benign and will not spread any further.

But some are malignant – this means they have the potential to spread throughout the body damaging tissues and bone, blocking passageways, and destroying nerves. These are the tumours referred to as cancers.

Symptoms vary from cancer to cancer but these are some of the more general ones:

- A Unusual growths or lumps
- B Unexplained weight loss
- C Loss of appetite
- D A sore or ulcer that will not heal
- E Nagging cough or hoarseness
- F Coughing up blood
- G A mole that bleeds or changes shape
- H Unexplained changes in bowel or bladder habits
- I Unusual discharges
- J Blood or brown 'coffee grounds' in vomit or stools
- K Recurrent pain in any part of the body

04

Diabetes

Put simply, diabetes is a condition where the body can no longer use and control glucose (sugar). As a result diabetics have abnormally high blood glucose levels.

Normally, the body controls blood glucose levels with a hormone called insulin but in diabetics, either:

- A the insulin doesn't work as well as it should, or
- B not enough insulin is produced, or
- C the body stops making insulin altogether.

Left untreated, high blood glucose levels can cause major health problems, such as:

- A blindness
- B kidney failure
- C heart disease
- D stroke
- E and nerve damage (which can, in turn, lead to impotence)

The key to avoiding these complications is early diagnosis, effective treatment and good self-management.

05

Weight problems

Health problems associated with weight can develop if you put on excess amounts of body fat and become overweight or obese. Excess fat around the abdomen can be a particular health risk and is very common in older men.

To find out if you're at risk, take your waist measurement at the belly button and compare it with these values:

- A 94 cm to 101 cm – overweight
- B 102 cm or more – obese

The following physical, psychological and social problems are linked to obesity:

- A Breathlessness, snoring, sleep disturbances
- B Knee, ankle and back pain, osteoarthritis
- C Excess sweating, athlete's foot
- D Sexual difficulties
- E Raised blood glucose levels and Type 2 diabetes
- F Raised blood pressure and stroke
- G Raised cholesterol and triglyceride (another fat in the blood) levels and heart disease
- H Gallstones
- I Colon and prostate cancers
- J Low self-esteem and depression

06

Sexual problems

Sexual problems such as the persistent or recurrent inability to achieve or maintain an erection good enough to complete your chosen sexual activity satisfactorily. The occasional inability to achieve a satisfactory erection doesn't normally constitute a problem.

Most men will experience an erection problem at least once. This could be due to stress, exhaustion, too much alcohol or simply not feeling like sex. Persistent erectile dysfunction (ED) is estimated to affect about 10% of men at any one time.

Although age itself isn't a cause of erectile dysfunction (ED), the risk nevertheless increases as you get older: 18% of 50–59 year olds have trouble with their erections compared with 7% of 18–29 year olds.