



Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Men's Health Peer Education

Men's Quick Health Check and Health Information Guide

See how you manage your health and wellbeing with this quick quiz.

A "Yes" answer scores 1. A "No" answer scores 0.

| | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Are you a non-smoker? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you visited your GP in the last year? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you had your blood pressure measured in the last year? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you had your waist measured in the last year? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you had your cholesterol levels measured in the last year? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you had your blood sugar levels measured in the last year? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you spoken to your GP about bowel health? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you had a bowel test in the last three years? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you have at least two alcohol-free days per week? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you spoken to your GP about prostate health? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (or 75 mins vigorous) each week? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you had your skin checked in the last year? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you eat at least two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables every day? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Are you happy in general, and not too stressed or worried? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

TOTAL

- Score: 14 ▶ Are you sure?? You deserve a medal!!
 11 - 13 ▶ Very Good
 9 - 10 ▶ Not Bad
 Less than 9 ▶ Maybe it's time for a chat with your Doctor

For the under 50s, health checks are important but are recommended on a two to three yearly basis unless you have been diagnosed with a health condition.

For further information on Men's Health Peer Education, please phone 133 254 (metro) or 1800 555 254 (country) and ask to speak with the DVA MHPE State Coordinator, or visit the MHPE website <http://www.dva.gov.au/mhpe.htm>

Men's Quick Health Check

Health Information Guide

This Health Information Guide explains why it's important to have a particular test and/or change lifestyle behaviours. The information is based on the MHPE Men's Quick Health Check (DVA Form D1302).

General Information on metabolic syndrome.

The term "metabolic syndrome" is generally accepted to include:

- Abdominal obesity – known as the "beer gut";
- High blood pressure;
- Insulin resistance – so that even if there is enough circulating insulin, the body still cannot handle glucose properly; and
- Abnormalities of blood fats, such as:
 - low "good" HDL cholesterol, or
 - high "bad" LDL cholesterol, or
 - high triglycerides.

If you have three out of four of the above factors, you have metabolic syndrome.

Why does it matter?

Firstly, it is extremely common and on the increase. Many people in the developed world, and larger numbers in some developing countries, eat too much of the wrong foods and do not get enough exercise.

Secondly, it is associated with a much higher risk of heart attack and stroke, as well as type 2 diabetes because of changes in blood vessel walls.

Thirdly, the best way of treating it is with lifestyle changes.

In Australia, some groups are particularly at risk of developing the metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes.

Men's Quick Health Check questions

1. Are you a non-smoker?

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Australia. Many medical conditions caused by smoking can result not just in death, but in living for years with disabling health problems. Scientific evidence confirms that smokers face significantly increased risk of death and illness as well as a reduction in their mobility. The primary illnesses associated with smoking are numerous cancers, heart disease, stroke, atherosclerosis, emphysema and other chronic respiratory diseases.

Smoking also affects the arteries that supply blood to the heart and other parts of the body. It reduces the amount of oxygen carried and damages

artery walls. Smoking increases the risk of heart attack, stroke and peripheral arterial disease (that can lead to gangrene and limb amputation).

Smoking makes blood 'stickier', causing blood cells to clump together. This slows blood flow through your arteries and makes blockages, which cause heart attack and stroke, more common.

2. Have you visited your GP in the last year?

Australian men make fewer GP visits than women, only 40% of men discuss healthy lifestyle issues with health professionals and 16% of men do not use any Medicare services at all—however, a greater proportion of emergency department presentations are by men. (The health of Australian males – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Report 2011.)

Research shows that men have generally poorer health outcomes compared to females. Many males are still at risk of poor health due to being overweight, lack of physical activity, poor diet, smoking and mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. An annual health check-up with your GP should be a priority.

3. Have you had your blood pressure measured in the last year?

Blood pressure is the pressure of the blood in your arteries - the blood vessels that carry oxygen and nutrients to the body as your blood is pumped around the body by the heart. Blood pressure depends on two main things: the amount of blood pumped by the heart and how easily the blood can flow through the arteries.

Your blood pressure will go up and down throughout the day, depending on the time of day and what you are doing. However, high blood pressure is a condition where your blood pressure is consistently high. Your family history, eating patterns, alcohol intake, weight and level of physical activity, have a strong influence on blood pressure. In some people, medicines, including steroids (cortisone-like medicines) and arthritis medicines, can also raise blood pressure.

High blood pressure can overload the heart and coronary arteries and speed up the artery-clogging process. This can lead to problems such as heart attack and stroke. High blood pressure can also affect arteries to other parts of the body, such as the eyes, kidneys and legs.

If high blood pressure is not treated, the heart may weaken because of the constant extra demand. This may cause 'heart failure', a serious condition with symptoms such as tiredness, shortness of breath and swelling of the feet and ankles.

4. Have you had your waist measured in the last year?

Measuring waist circumference is a simple check to tell how much body fat you have and where it is placed around your body. Where your fat is located can be an important sign of your risk of developing an ongoing health problem.

Waist measurement compares closely with body mass index (BMI); however waist measurement is often seen as a better way of checking a person's risk of developing a chronic disease. It is important to measure your waist circumference accurately. Measure directly against your skin, breathe out normally, and make sure the tape is snug, without compressing the skin. The correct place to measure your waist is horizontally halfway between your lower rib and the top of your hipbone – roughly in line with your belly button. A man has an increased risk of being overweight if his waist measurement is more than 94 cms (WOMEN – more than 80 cms).

No matter what your height or build, an increased waistline is a sign that you could be at greater risk of developing serious ongoing health problems including chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and some cancers.

Carrying extra weight around your middle (being 'apple-shaped') is more of a health risk, so it is especially important for you to lose weight if this is the case. To achieve a healthy body weight, balance the energy (kilojoules) coming into your body through food and drinks with the energy (kilojoules) being used up by your body through regular physical activity.

5. Have you had your cholesterol levels measured in the last year?

Cholesterol is a fatty substance produced naturally by your body. You can also get cholesterol from some foods. It is used for many different things in your body, but is a problem when there's too much of it in your blood.

A high total blood cholesterol level causes fatty material to gradually build up in coronary arteries, making it harder for blood to flow through. It is mainly caused by eating foods high in saturated and trans fats.

Your total blood cholesterol level includes two types of blood cholesterol.

- **Low density lipoprotein (LDL)** is also known as 'bad' cholesterol because it can add to the build up of plaque in your arteries and increase your risk of getting coronary heart disease (CHD).
- **High density lipoprotein (HDL)** is also known as 'good' cholesterol because it helps to protect you against Coronary Heart Disease. Most of the total cholesterol in your blood is made up of LDL cholesterol. Only a small part is made up of HDL cholesterol. It's best to aim for a low LDL cholesterol level and a higher HDL cholesterol level.

6. Have you had your blood sugar levels measured in the last year?

For our bodies to work properly, we need to convert glucose (sugar) from food into energy. A hormone called insulin is essential for the conversion of glucose into energy. In people with diabetes, insulin is no longer produced or not produced in sufficient amounts by the body. So when people with diabetes eat glucose, which is in foods such as: breads, cereals, fruit and starchy vegetables, legumes, milk, yoghurt and sweets, it can't be converted into energy. Instead of being turned into energy the glucose stays in the

blood. This is why blood glucose levels are higher in people with diabetes. Everyone with diabetes should test their blood sugar, or glucose levels regularly. Knowing your blood sugar levels allows you to alter your diabetes management strategy if your levels aren't near your target blood sugar. Also, regular testing of your blood sugar can help reduce your risk of having long-term complications from diabetes. Prediabetes is a condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal, although not high enough to be diabetes. Pre-diabetes has no signs or symptoms but there are a range of risk factors including obesity, smoking, heart disease and high blood pressure. People with pre-diabetes have a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular (heart and circulation) disease. Without treatment, about one in three people with pre-diabetes will develop type 2 diabetes.

7. Have you spoken to your GP about bowel health?

Bowel cancer is the second most common cancer affecting men in Australia. The risk increases with age, particularly from age 50. If detected early, the chance of successful treatment and long-term survival improves significantly. Not all bowel cancers show symptoms and experiencing symptoms does not necessarily mean you have bowel cancer. However you should see your doctor if you notice:

- Bleeding from the back passage (rectum) or any sign of blood after a bowel motion.
- A change in usual bowel habit, such as straining (constipation) to go to the toilet or loose motions (diarrhoea).
- Abdominal pain or bloating
- Weight loss for no obvious reason, or loss of appetite
- Symptoms of anaemia – including unexplained tiredness, weakness or breathlessness.

8. Have you had a bowel test in the last three years?

If over the age of fifty, you should have a blood test of your stools every two years. The test can help detect bowel cancer in its early stages. In addition, anyone with a family history of any cancers should have a three yearly colonoscopy.

9. Do you have at least two alcohol-free days per week?

Misuse of alcohol, that is, excessive consumption on a single occasion or over a lifetime, is a major risk factor for mortality in Australia. In terms of chronic disease, regular consumption of alcohol contributes to some cancers, liver disease and diabetes.

To limit health and social risks of alcohol:

- For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 2 standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury.

- For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 4 standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.

10. Have you spoken to your GP about prostate health?

The prostate is a small but important gland in the male reproductive system. Its main role is to make fluid that protects and feeds sperm. The prostate is about the size of a walnut and sits underneath the bladder, and surrounds the top part of the urethra. Prostate disease is a term used to describe any medical problems that affects the prostate gland. Prostate disease includes:

- **Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia** – non-cancerous enlargement or growth of the prostate gland.
- **Prostatitis** – inflammation of the prostate gland, because of infection.
- **Prostate Cancer** – a problem in which cells within the prostate grow and divide abnormally, and a tumour grows in the prostate. Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed in men in Australia and is more common in men over 50 years of age. The causes are not known, however there are certain risk factors that have been linked with the development of prostate cancer, including: family history, age, diet, subfertility (diminished reproductive capacity) and race (men of Caucasian background are more at risk).

SOURCE: ANDROLOGY AUSTRALIA.

11. Do you do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (or 75 mins vigorous) each week?

Physical inactivity increases the risk of mortality from a range of diseases and conditions. Physical inactivity can lead to an increased risk of chronic disease such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. In contrast, regular physical activity reduces feelings of depression and anxiety, helps to maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints, helps to prevent falls among older people and promotes feelings of well-being.

Try to be active on most days, and accumulate 150 to 300 minutes (2.5 - 5 hours) of moderate physical activity or 75 to 150 minutes (1.25 - 2.5 hours) of vigorous physical activity (or a combination) each week. Add muscle strengthening activities on at least two days each week, and minimise or break up any long periods of sitting.

If possible, those 65 and over should try to achieve the above recommendations. At a minimum, they should do some form of physical activity, and incorporate fitness, strength, balance flexibility activities, according to capability and safety.

Talk to your GP first: Start slowly and gradually build up your duration, frequency and intensity of activity.

12. Have you had your skin checked in the last year?

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Protection against skin cancer is best achieved by regular annual skin examinations and treatment by your doctor and the wearing of sensible protection when outdoors. Slip on sun protective clothing, slop on 30+ sunscreen, Slap on a hat, Seek shade and Slide on some sunglasses.

13. Do you eat at least two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables every day?

Everyone needs to eat a variety of foods every day. This is the best and safest way to get the widest range of nutrients, as opposed to just taking a vitamin or mineral supplement. Vegetables, legumes and fruit are "protective foods" – they are packed with vitamins, minerals and other compounds that support good health. Eating these foods will ensure that your immune system is enhanced and you will be protected from illness. Fruit and vegetables are low in fat, salt and sugar and provide a good source of dietary fibre – helping you to reduce obesity and maintain a healthy weight, and lower your cholesterol and blood pressure.

14. Are you happy in general, and not too stressed or worried?

Good physical and mental health will help you to deal better with life's ups and downs, now and in the future. Our mental health is as important to our wellbeing as our physical health. There are simple ways to maintain good mental health:

- Exercise regularly
- Join in a social activity
- Spend time with family and friends
- Talk to your mates of family – don't bottle it up
- Accept that it's normal to react emotionally to difficult situations – don't be too hard on yourself.

MHPE Volunteer: _____

Contact: _____

Phone 133 254 or 1800 555 254 from regional Australia

Website: www.dva.gov.au/mhpe.htm



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