

The Medical Tests Every Man Should Have



I was speaking recently with emergency physician and Temple University clinical instructor Richard O'Brien, MD, about how men are reluctant to go to the doctor unless they are seriously ill or badly injured. "Many men know the maintenance schedules of their cars better than they know their own bodies' maintenance schedules," he lamented. Among the medical tests that men need regularly...

■ **Annual prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test** starting at age 50 (earlier for African-Americans and men with a family history of prostate cancer).

■ **Annual digital rectal exam (DRE)** to check for enlarged prostate, starting at age 40.

■ **Electrocardiogram** every three or four years, starting at age 40 (earlier if there is a family history of heart disease).

■ **Colonoscopy** every 10 years—or sigmoidoscopy every five years—starting at age 50 (earlier if there is a family history of colon cancer).

■ **Testosterone level screening**, including blood test and lifestyle questionnaire, starting at age 40. Discuss the appropriate frequency for you with your physician.

■ **Monthly testicle and breast (yes, breast!) self-exams** to check for potentially cancerous lumps. See your physician if you find anything suspicious. Don't just hope that lumps will go away.

Staying informed is key. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, the source of most health information for men is women—wives, girlfriends and/or mothers. Women tend to get their information from doctors, television, the Internet and printed materials. *Bottom Line/Personal* and our sister publications, *Bottom Line/Health* and *Bottom Line Natural Healing*, can be valuable resources. One of my favorite all-around health Web sites is sponsored by the National Library of Medicine (www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus). It has a

special section on men's health issues. Also check out the nonprofit Men's Health Network at www.menshealthnetwork.org.

Rich also shared with me the most important new research findings in men's health...

■ **Taking daily aspirin**, ibuprofen or another nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) cuts in half the incidence of an enlarged prostate.

■ **Low testosterone** in older men is associated with increased mortality risk. Over a four-year period, men over age 40 with low testosterone were about 70% more likely to die than men with normal levels.

■ **Men with erectile dysfunction (ED)** should be watched closely for coronary artery disease (CAD). More than 90% of men with both ED and CAD reported symptoms of ED one to three years before experiencing severe chest pain.

■ **About 10% of new fathers** (compared with 14% of new mothers) suffer from postpartum depression. Male or female, anyone who experiences depression for more than two weeks should seek professional help.

Women are more accustomed to consulting with physicians, having used them more than men in their younger years because of pregnancy, birth control, urinary tract infections and other common conditions in women. Men's health issues, such as prostate problems, tend to develop later in life. (Rich, who just turned 50, recently experienced his first acute problem—serious neck and shoulder pain—in more than 20 years.)

Don't be shy, men. Silence can kill. And an ounce of prevention truly is worth a pound of cure when it comes to your health.

Marjory Abrams

P.S. Rich O'Brien is a guest speaker on the upcoming *Bottom Line Healthier, Wealthier and Wiser Cruise*, February 18 – 25, 2007 (800-707-1634 or www.BottomLineCruise.com).