

Partnering Toward a Healthier Future: Highlighting Men's Health, June 2011

Each third Sunday in June, we honor men who have made significant contributions to our individual lives through the 45-year old tradition of Father's Day. Whether we call them father, grandfather, brother, son, uncle, neighbor or friend, we appreciate the example and sacrifices these men make to improve our well-being. Appropriately, we also celebrate Men's Health Week during the third week of this month – this year, June 13-19, when we urge the important men in our lives taking to care of *their* lives.

Traditionally and statistically speaking, men are not as health conscious as women. Although heart disease is more prevalent in women, men are twice as likely to die from the condition. Men are also 24 percent less likely than women to make an annual visit to the doctor. This reduced health-seeking behavior is a potential contributor to the significantly reduced life expectancy for men, which averages five years less than women. While Asian men tend to have the highest life expectancy among men from other ethnic groups, African-American men consistently have lower life expectancies than whites and African-American women in the United States.

Practice Prevention

While discouraging, the previously mentioned health statistics do not have to define the health of all men. All of us can do our part to encourage the men in our lives to be better stewards of their health.

Following the adage that, "*It is better to prepare and prevent than to repair and repent,*" a key component of improving men's health is receiving recommended health screenings. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services recommends the following:

- **Start early.** Get in the habit of annual physical examinations **at age 18** and continue them throughout your life. Being proactive will help your physician to identify and monitor any health concerns. Mothers, sisters and friends, encourage the young men in your life to begin a pattern of healthy living *now*.
- Beginning **at age 50**, both men *and* women should receive colonoscopies to screen for colorectal cancer. This screening should be done once every 10 years, depending upon family and health history.
- Starting the discussion about prostate screenings with your physician also begins **at age 50**; however, African-American men with a family history of prostate cancer should have this conversation around age 45.
- Check your blood pressure regularly. Annual physical examinations are a great opportunity to gather this information. Additionally, have your cholesterol levels assessed periodically (at least every five years) based on family history and personal health risk factors. Knowing your blood pressure and cholesterol levels are key factors to preventing cardiovascular disease.

Note that with the exception of prostate examinations, all of the preventive health measures listed are applicable to both **men** AND women; hence, a key to ***prevention is partnering.***

"Recognizing and preventing men's health problems are not just a man's issue. Because of its impact on wives, mothers, daughters and sisters, men's health is truly a family issue."—
Congressman Bill Richardson (D-New Mexico), May 1994

News You Can Use

Another important preventative measure in living healthier is eating healthier. Review tips from the Center on Health Disparities March 2011 Newsletter Highlighting Nutritious Habits:

<http://www.adventisthealthcare.com/pdf/CHD-201103-enews-Mar-Nutrition.pdf>

Check out Adventist HealthCare's webpage especially dedicated to men's health:

<https://www.adventisthealthcare.com/health/info/features/health-month/june/#Heart-Disease>

To see a list of recommended screenings for men by age, go to

<http://www.adventisthealthcare.com/health/info/tools/lifelines/health-screenings-men/or>

<http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthymen.htm>

References:

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Center on
Health Disparities

At Adventist HealthCare