

# Some of the most common health concerns for men

## CORONARY HEART DISEASE

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the most common cause of heart attacks and was the leading cause of death for both men and women throughout the world, as per the latest 2023 stats. <sup>1</sup>

It is caused when the blood supply to the heart is obstructed by fatty deposits building up in the coronary arteries. Some of the main symptoms of CHD include:

- angina (chest pain or discomfort)
- shortness of breath
- feeling faint or nauseas.

Not everyone will experience the same symptoms, and some may not have any. Risk factors include obesity, smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes.

## PROSTATE HEALTH

The prostate sits under the bladder and in front of the rectum. It produces the fluid that mixes with sperm to make semen and, as men get older, it tends to increase in size.

An enlarged prostate can affect urination, though not everyone experiences any issues at all.

## PROSTATE CANCER

Prostate cancer develops slowly and often has no symptoms, particularly early on.

The symptoms that do exist tend to be subtle and difficult to detect, but they include:

- needing to urinate urgently
- difficulty in urinating (if the flow stops, starts or there is strain to urinate)
- urinating frequently (particularly at night), or feeling like a member can't fully empty their bladder
- pain when urinating, or blood in the urine or semen (these are rare)
- severe weight loss
- lower back pain or bone pain

There are of course plenty of benign conditions that could cause these symptoms, but it's worth seeing the GP if a member is concerned. Particularly if a member is over 50, as the chances of developing prostate cancer increase as they get older.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Men are less likely to access psychological therapies than women, with only 36% of referrals to NHS talking therapies being men.<sup>2</sup> Societal expectations and outdated macho stereotypes can make it difficult for men to open up or even admit they need support.

It's as important to look after mental health as it is physical health. And just as there are multiple factors that affect the body physically, there are many issues that can cause mental suffering, including:

- stress at work, and/or burnout
- relationship problems
- isolation, which was a particular issue during the pandemic
- drug/alcohol use
- physical health problems
- financial issues

It's important to maintain mental health to make sure setbacks can be coped with and ensure they don't turn into long-term issues.

There are plenty of ways a member can manage their wellbeing, from exercise and meditation to speaking to a professional.

<sup>1</sup> *Coronary Heart Disease* – [British Heart Foundation](#)

<sup>2</sup> *Mental Health Statistics* – [Mental Health Foundation](#)

With hormone levels changing, immune systems weakening, and bodies becoming more susceptible to certain injuries or conditions, for men, some of these changes can be fairly gradual.

They may find that they have less energy or that their memory isn't as good as it once was. They may notice that it takes longer to recover from an illness or injury, or they may even experience fluctuations in their mood.

These are natural changes that happen as testosterone levels become lower and muscles, bones, and joints weaken over time. As an individual gets older, it becomes more and more important to manage their health, adapt their exercise routine and take time to maintain good mental health.



## WHAT CHANGES AND HEALTH ISSUES COULD AFFECT MEMBERS AS THEY GET OLDER?

### **Muscles, bones and joints**

Bones may become weaker with age. They often lose density and can even shrink in size, making them more likely to fracture or break. Likewise, muscles and joint ligaments tend to become weaker and less flexible, which means there's an increased risk of injury, pain or a loss of stability.

### **Prostate**

As men get older, the risk of experiencing complications with their prostate will increase. According to Prostate Cancer UK, one in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

### **Mental health**

Depression, mood swings, stress and mental fatigue are all common in older men, and can lead to a loss of sex drive or impotence, further impacting the mood.

There are multiple cause for mental health challenges, from hormonal changes to difficulty dealing with physical limitations or lifestyle shifts. It's important not to ignore these feelings and seek help if struggling.

## HOW A MEMBER CAN LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES AS THEY GET OLDER

### **Sleep**

When we sleep, our bodies recharge. Muscles and cells repair themselves and the mind relaxes. A member should aim for around seven to nine hours of sleep per night, ideally going to bed and waking up at the same time each day.

### **Healthy habits**

Whatever a member's age, one of the best ways to look after their older self is to cut out the bad habits now, and then replace them with healthy habits, like eating well. By managing their lifestyle, the member can help prevent health conditions and stay healthy as they get older.

### **Exercise**

Regular exercise is always important. But as a member gets older, they may need to adjust their routine to avoid injury or focus on the kinds of movement that will benefit them the most.

By swimming, instead of running, for example, the member will aid their mobility and flexibility without risking damage to important joints and muscles.

## Hydration

Drinking plenty of water is important for the immune system, energy levels, digestion, maintaining a healthy weight, organ function and healthy skin. So, it is essential to stay hydrated.

## Keeping the mind active

It's not just bodies that can weaken with age. It is important to maintain a healthy mind too. Brain training can help improve memory and keep the mind alert. This can include doing puzzles, reading and socialising. Physical activity is also very important for mind health.

Ageing can also affect mood, so mindfulness exercises, therapy and taking time for oneself is important when it comes to easing stress levels and understanding emotions.

## PHC's services

### Mental Health Assessments and Support service

Faster access to support and treatment for mental health conditions via our clinically led pathway, without the need for a GP referral. Members can benefit from:

- Talking to an expert without any fuss
- Receiving the right care and treatment
- Quality care nationwide
- Guidance every step of the way

Available to over 18's only and only if Mental Health is a core benefit on the member's plan.

### Muscle, Bone and Joint Support service

An enhanced route to care for muscle, bone, and joint problems. A simple to use, clinically designed online assessment that will direct a member to the right clinician without the need for a GP referral.

Available to over 18's only and only if Mental Health is a core benefit on the member's plan.

### Dedicated Cancer Service

A member will be put in touch with PHC's Dedicated Nurse Service to get a swift diagnosis and prompt treatment access.