



# Supporting men's health

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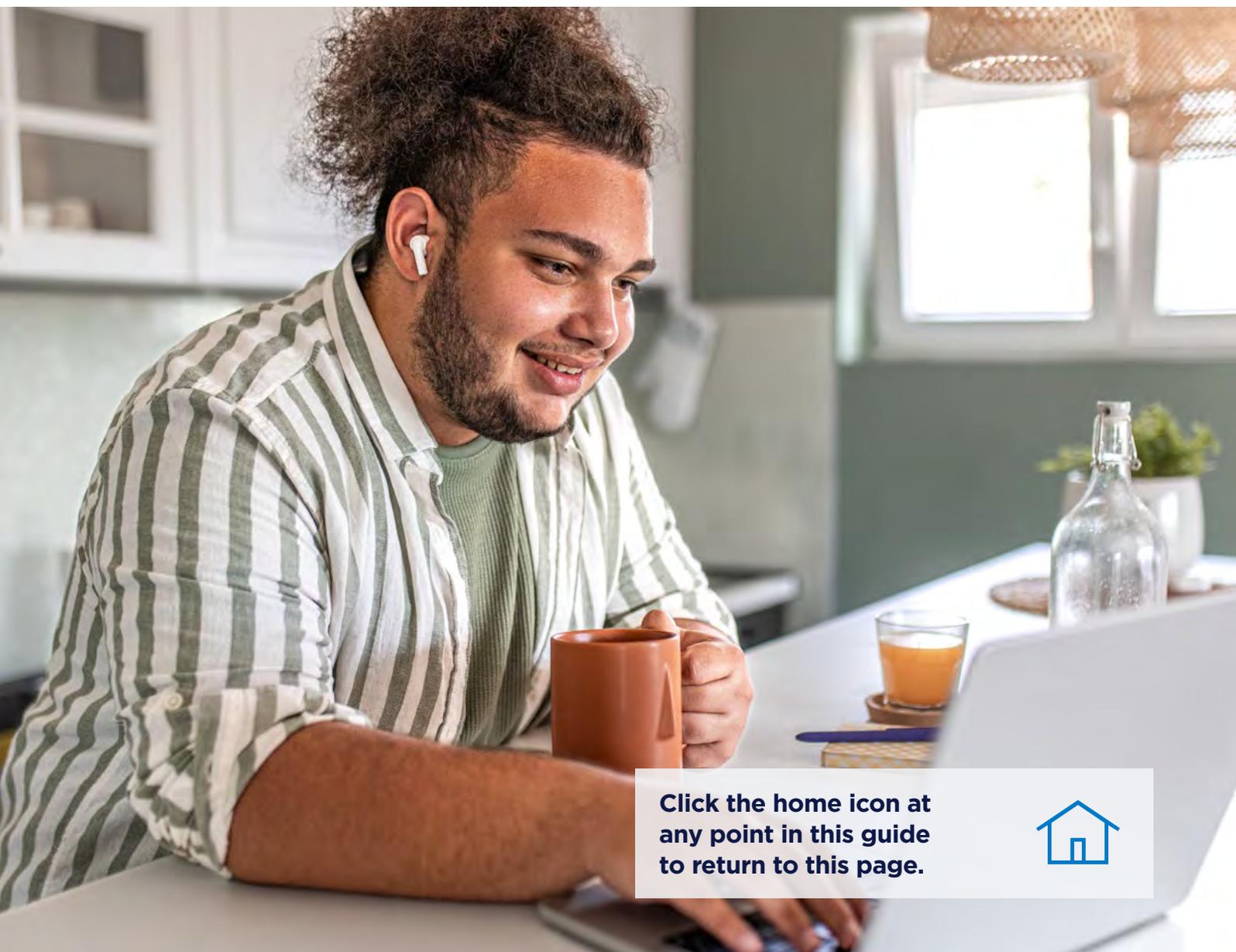
Workplace

Health and Wellbeing **Academy**

# Introduction

**Here we look at some of the health concerns affecting men, and how you can support them to live longer, healthier, and happier lives.**

It's important to note that this guide uses the words "man" and "men" when needed to accurately represent the resources we have used. But this information might also be relevant to some transgender, non-binary and intersex people who don't identify as men.



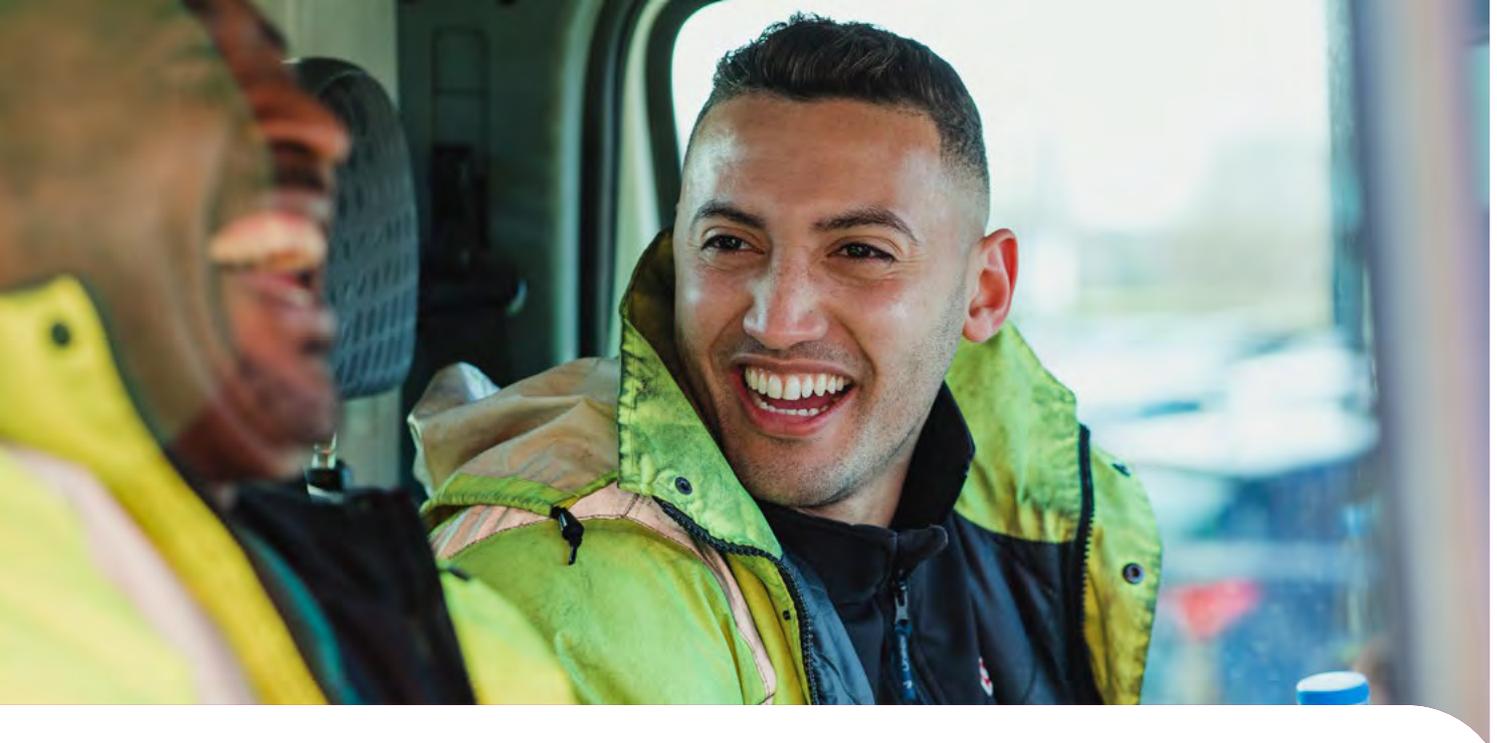
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Importance of men's health

What do men need support with?

How to talk about health



## Why is it important to champion men's health?

Health and wellbeing is important to everybody, but unfortunately, men can often experience poorer health than women.<sup>2</sup> In the UK, men die, on average, around three and a half years younger than women too.<sup>1</sup>

**There are lots of different reasons for these differences in health and wellbeing.**

**In general, men seem to be less likely to:**

- adopt healthy behaviours
- visit a doctor when they aren't feeling well
- talk about the symptoms of their illness to a doctor when they do see one

**They are also more likely to:<sup>2</sup>**

- have jobs that are considered dangerous
- engage in risky behaviours (drugs/alcohol/gambling)

But there are some things you can do to help your male team members to be as healthy as they can, both mentally and physically.

**In the UK, men die, on average, around three and a half years younger than women.<sup>1</sup>**



# What do men need support with?

## Accessing healthcare

You can help your employees to access healthcare services such as doctor's appointments, cancer screenings and counselling sessions. You could consider:

- encouraging people to seek help with any health issues straight away
- trying to be flexible about the times people can attend medical appointments
- making sure people know who to speak to at work about any health concerns they have<sup>3,4</sup>
- promoting more accessible options such as virtual medical appointments, and online support services
- signposting people to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) if you have one<sup>4</sup>

**Make sure people know who to speak to at work about any health concerns they have.**

## Mental health

Many men avoid talking about their emotions and feelings,<sup>3</sup> but this doesn't mean they aren't struggling with their mental health. In fact, around three out of every four people who die by suicide are men.<sup>4</sup> It's important we encourage and support men to be more open about their mental wellbeing, and to seek the support they need.

There are some general signs that someone might be struggling with their mental health, such as feeling low, being more worried than usual and having trouble sleeping.<sup>7</sup> But men might also display other signs such as:<sup>5</sup>

- being irritable
- being aggressive
- having sudden bursts of anger
- losing control
- taking more risks

If you recognise any of these signs in a member of your team, it might be a good idea to reach out to them and offer help and support.

- Encourage them to speak to a GP about the way they're feeling.<sup>4</sup>
- Let them know if there are any mental health first aiders at work.<sup>4</sup>
- Signpost to organisations like Mind and Samaritans, who offer telephone and online support.<sup>4</sup>
- Try to speak to people about pushing themselves too hard at work. Encourage breaks, switching off emails after hours and help people to prioritise their workloads.<sup>4</sup>

**You can find more guidance about supporting employee mental health at**

**[www.bupa.co.uk/business/workplace-wellbeing-hub](http://www.bupa.co.uk/business/workplace-wellbeing-hub)**



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## Cancer awareness

Men are more likely to get cancer, and sadly, more likely to die from it.<sup>6</sup> We know that men are less likely to seek help for cancer symptoms,<sup>7</sup> but we also know cancer that's detected earlier is easier to treat.<sup>8</sup>

This means it's important to encourage awareness of cancers that people might not know how to check for or be embarrassed to talk about. These include prostate cancer, testicular cancer and penile cancer.

### Men are less likely to seek help for cancer symptoms.<sup>7</sup>

- Encourage people to attend cancer screenings, including during work hours if it's feasible.
- Take part in awareness events such as Movember, to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer and how to check for them.
- Signpost to relevant charities and organisations which can provide information and support.

### Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men in the UK, making up 26% of all male cancer cases.\*

\*Cancer incidence for common cancers. Cancer Research UK.





## Stopping smoking

Men are more likely to smoke than women.<sup>9</sup> Supporting people to give up smoking will help them to reduce the risk to their health.

- Promote local and online stop smoking support services,<sup>10</sup> such as the NHS Smokefree online hub and helpline.
- Allow people to access support services during work hours, if possible.<sup>12</sup>
- Consider developing a smoking cessation policy.<sup>12</sup>

## Eating more healthily

Men in the UK tend to eat too much salt and saturated fat and not enough fruit and vegetables.<sup>11</sup> Eating well is not only good for wellbeing, it also helps people be more focused and productive at work.<sup>12</sup>

- Encourage people to take a lunch break away from their desk.<sup>13</sup>
- When people are in the workplace make sure they have somewhere to purchase and eat healthy foods at a reasonable price. Allow people to store and heat up food they bring from home.<sup>15</sup>
- Think about the types of foods provided at in-person meetings.<sup>15</sup>

## Meeting snacks.

**Are you offering enough healthy options?**

## Getting enough exercise

Men tend to do more exercise than women but even so, only 65% of them are physically active.<sup>14</sup> Exercise can be great for both mental and physical health. It can help people to feel happier, get fitter and manage their stress.<sup>15</sup>

- Promote any exercise programmes that are available through work and consider offering classes that are just for men.<sup>16</sup>
- Allow people to attend any virtual meetings by phone so that they can move around while talking.<sup>15</sup>
- If your team have desk-based roles, encourage them to get up, stretch and move around to break up the time they spend sitting down.<sup>15</sup>

## Team events.

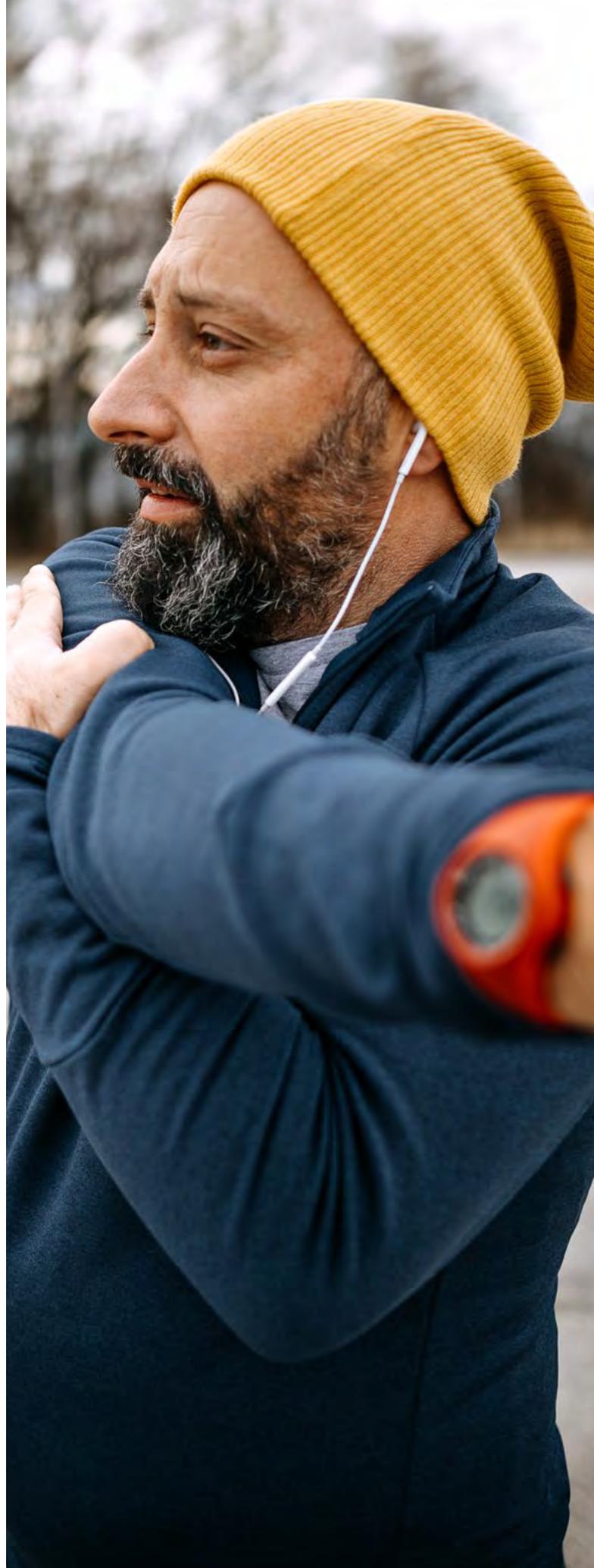
**Are they always focused around drinking?**

**Mix it up.**

## Managing alcohol

Men are more likely to drink excess alcohol<sup>2</sup> than women. This can be a problem for physical and mental health, as well as causing problems at work.<sup>16</sup>

- Try to encourage people to get help if they need it.<sup>16</sup>
- Don't base work events around alcohol if possible.<sup>17</sup>
- Make sure people know that even a small amount of alcohol can affect the safety of using heavy machinery or completing other dangerous tasks.<sup>16</sup>





## How to talk about health

Health and wellbeing can sometimes feel like difficult things to talk about, but open conversations can really help people to feel supported at work.



Try to create a culture that focuses on wellbeing so that people feel they can talk about their health in an inclusive and non-judgemental environment.<sup>18</sup>



Give people opportunities to talk about their health in a private and confidential setting. Regular catchups with managers and supervisors can be helpful for this.<sup>20</sup>



Make sure that managers and team leaders have the skills and resources they need to support people with health conditions.<sup>20</sup>

# Resources

## Men's health information from Bupa

[bupa.co.uk/health-information/mens-health](https://bupa.co.uk/health-information/mens-health)

## Advice on talking about mental wellbeing with your team

[bupa.co.uk/business/open-up](https://bupa.co.uk/business/open-up)

## Managers' guides, including a guide to supporting transgender colleagues

[bupa.co.uk/business/workplace-wellbeing-hub](https://bupa.co.uk/business/workplace-wellbeing-hub)

Bupa health assessments can support your employees to proactively manage their health. They provide a clear overview of an employee's current health status and a view of any future health risks. They also offer a personal lifestyle action plan with achievable health goals for a happier, healthier future.

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