Supporting men’s health.

Bupa. Better for business
Introduction.

Here we look at some of the health concerns that affect men the most, 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 evidence 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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Why is it important to champion men’s health?

Health and wellbeing are important to everybody, but we know that men tend to be in worse health than women\(^2\). In the UK, men die, on average, around three and a half years younger\(^1\).

There are lots of different reasons for this, including that 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\(^2\):
- have dangerous jobs
- engage in risk-taking

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

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What do men need support with?

Accessing healthcare
Here are just a few of the ways you can help men access services like GP appointments, cancer screenings and counselling sessions.

- Encourage people to seek help with any health issues straight away instead of putting it off.
- Try to be flexible about the times people can attend medical appointments wherever possible.
- Make sure people know who to speak to at work about any health concerns they have, such as an occupational health nurse or HR. Make it clear how to access these services when working from home.
- Promote more accessible options such as nearby screening programmes, virtual medical appointments and online support services.
- Signpost to an employee assistance programme (EAP) if you have one.

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4 People managers’ guide to mental health. Chartered Institute of Personnel Development.
Mental health

Many men avoid talking about their emotions and feelings\(^5\), but this doesn’t mean they aren’t struggling with their mental health. 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, such as feeling low, being more worried than usual and having trouble sleeping\(^7\). But men might also display other signs such as\(^7\):

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

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Around

3 in 4 people who die by suicide are men.\(^6\)

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\(^4\) People managers’ guide to mental health. Chartered Institute of Personnel Development.
\(^5\) Gender and mental health at work. Business in the Community.
\(^6\) Suicides in England and Wales: 2019 registrations.
\(^7\) Depression and men. Royal College of Psychiatrists.
Cancer awareness
Men are more likely to get cancer, and sadly, more likely to die from it. We know that men are less likely to seek help for cancer symptoms, but we also know cancer that’s detected earlier is easier to treat.

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

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.*

Stopping smoking
Men are more likely to smoke than women. Supporting people to give up smoking will help them to reduce the risk to their health.

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

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*Cancer incidence for common cancers. Cancer Research UK.

10The Cancer Awareness in the Workplace programme. Cancer Research UK.
**Eating healthier**
Men in the UK tend to eat too much salt and saturated fat and not enough fruit and vegetables\(^1\). Eating well is not only good for wellbeing, it also helps people be more focused and productive at work\(^2\).

- Encourage people to take a lunch break away from their desk\(^3\).
- 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\(^4\).
- Think about the types of foods provided at in-person meetings\(^5\).

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\(^1\)Men. British Nutrition Foundation.
\(^3\)Physical activity, healthy eating and healthier weight: a toolkit for employers. Business in the Community.
Getting enough exercise
Men tend to do more exercise than women but even so, only 65% of them are physically active. Exercise can be great for both mental and physical health. It can help people to feel happier, get fitter and manage their stress.

- Promote any exercise programmes that are available through work and consider offering classes that are just for those who identify as male.
- Allow people to attend any virtual meetings by phone so that they can move around while talking.
- 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.

Managing alcohol
Men are more likely to drink excess alcohol than women. This can be a problem for physical and mental health, as well as cause problems at work.

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

Team events.
Are they always focused around drinking? Mix it up.

31% of men drink more than 14 units per week, compared to 16% of women*

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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\textsuperscript{20}.
- 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\textsuperscript{21}.
- Make sure that managers and team leaders have the skills and resources they need to support people with health conditions\textsuperscript{20}.

\textsuperscript{20}Employee health and well-being: Recommendations for employers. Chartered Institute of Personnel Development.
\textsuperscript{21}People managers’ guide to mental health. Chartered Institute of Personnel Development.
Resources.

More on men’s health
bupa.co.uk/health-information/mens-health

Advice on talking about mental wellbeing with your team
bupa.co.uk/business/open-up

Managers’ guides, including a guide to supporting transgender colleagues
bupa.co.uk/business/workplace-wellbeing-hub/managing-wellbeing

Stop smoking resource
bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/benefts-giving-up-smoking
bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/quit-smoking-healthily
bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/breaking-smoking-habit
bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/giving-up-smoking

Sources
4. People managers’ guide to mental health. Chartered Institute of Personnel Development www.cipd.co.uk published September 2018
5. Gender and mental health at work. Business in the Community www.bitc.org.uk published July 16 2020