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Cancer in Men: Four to Watch

The cancers that most often affect men are prostate, colon, lung and skin cancers. Doing what you can to prevent them — or find them early when they are easier to treat — can help you lead a longer, healthier life.

Prostate Cancer

- **What is it:** [Prostate cancer](#) is the second most common cancer in American men. The risk grows with age. Having close family members with it raises your risk. The good news: It's highly curable.
- **What you can do:** Talk about your risk factors at your next checkup. In general, screening should start in your 40s or 50s. Changes in urination, painful ejaculation or pain in the back, hip or pelvis areas are reasons to call your doctor sooner.

Colon Cancer

- **What is it:** Cancers of the colon and rectum are called [colorectal cancer](#). They have many common features. Most start as a growth, or polyp, on the inner lining of the colon or rectum. Some change into cancer over time, but not all polyps become cancer.
- **What you can do:** Talk to your doctor about what screening tests you need. Regular screening can often find problems early, when a problem is small and hasn't spread. That makes it simpler to treat. For colorectal cancer, screening may even prevent cancer because a polyp can take 10 to 15 years to grow into cancer. A doctor can remove it during a screening test like a colonoscopy.

Lung Cancer

- **What is it:** [Lung cancer](#) is a leading cause of cancer death in men. Smoking causes most lung cancers, but nonsmokers can also develop it.
- **What you can do:** Don't smoke or use tobacco. Avoid second-hand smoke. Limit your exposure to radiation.

Skin Cancer

- **What is it:** [Skin cancer](#) is the most common kind of cancer. There are several types. The severity and treatment options vary by type. Basal and squamous cell skin cancers are often found in areas exposed to the sun. That includes the arms, neck and head, but they can happen in other areas. They are very common but are often easily treatable. Melanoma is a more dangerous type of skin cancer that is likely to grow and spread.
- **What you can do:** Keep an eye on your skin. If you see any new spots or changes in moles that concern you, have a doctor take a look. Avoid sunburn and tanning in the sun or tanning beds. Use sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher. Try to stay in the shade when you're out during the day, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Cover

up with clothing, a hat and UV-blocking sunglasses. The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends regular visits to a dermatologist for a skin exam.

Lower Your Risk for Cancer

When it comes to lowering cancer risk, the American Cancer Society says men should:

- Avoid all forms of tobacco.
- Keep a healthy weight.
- Eat healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables.
- Keep moving with regular exercise.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink.
- Take steps to protect your skin.
- Know your family health history.
- Get regular checkups.

Boost Your Health with an Annual Doctor Visit

Often, men don't pay as much attention to their health as women, says the National Institutes of Health. In addition to being more likely to engage in risky behaviors, men are less likely to see a doctor for a routine health exam. That's one risky decision.

Men have health problems that can hit anyone, such as heart disease and stroke, cancer, diabetes and depression. These and other major health risks, including those unique to men such as prostate cancer, can be best treated when they are found early.

Yet a study by the [Cleveland Clinic](#) found that:

- Six in 10 (61 percent) men have skipped going to see a doctor, even when they know they needed to go.
- More than half (56 percent) say they keep health concerns to themselves and do not share them with anyone.
- Only 47 percent of men under the age of 35 do testicular self-exams.

Like women, most men know they should aim to avoid health problems by choosing a healthy lifestyle that includes regular exercise and a healthy diet and not smoking or drinking too much.

But if you do just one thing for your health this year, make it this: *See your doctor.* A routine yearly visit, complete with any suggested screening tests, is a vital first step in keeping up good health.

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Sources: [Prostate Cancer Symptoms and Signs](#), Prostate Cancer Foundation; [What is Prostate Cancer](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018; [Cancer Facts for Men](#), American Cancer Society (ACS), 2018; [What is Colorectal Cancer](#), ACS, 2018; [Skin Cancer](#), ACS; [Prevention Guidelines](#), Skin Cancer Foundation; [Lung Cancer Prevention](#), National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health (NIH), 2019; [What is Cancer](#), National Cancer Institute, NIH, 2015; [Men's Health](#), MedlinePlus, National Institutes of Health, 2018; [Cleveland Clinic Survey: Spouses/Significant Others Play an Influential Role in Getting Men to Take Their Health Seriously](#), Cleveland Clinic, 2018