

PORTLAND family

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Your Information & Entertainment Resource

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by Deston Nokes

MEN'S HEALTH REMINDERS

WE'VE SEEN THE ADS: from pills that bestow the libido of a jack rabbit, to television spots shaming you into wondering if you have low testosterone, there's clearly a pharmaceutical industry-driven campaign to get men thinking about their vitality.

However, instead of worrying about mysterious, even illusionary, new ailments, doctors tell their male patients that the key to remaining healthy remains rooted in the basics: lead a healthy lifestyle, get annual checkups, have preventive screenings and pay attention to your family history.

Portland Family interviewed Andrew Bodmer, PA-C, a physician assistant at Providence Medical Group Bridgeport Clinic in Tigard, Oregon, to discover what the primary health issues are for men in different age groups and how they can be addressed.



EARLY 20s

According to Bodmer, young men are the hardest age group to give medical advice to, because they are at a different maturity level. "They feel invincible, as though nothing can happen to them," he said. "They are socializing more and may not be in monogamous relationships. I generally talk about safe sex practices, using alcohol in moderation and avoiding drugs."

Bodmer said that he's seen an increase in the use of MDMA (Ecstasy), and methamphetamine continues to be a big problem. Plus, cocaine use seems to be increasing again, but it's not as popular as the cheaper meth, he observed.

Are patients forthcoming in their use of drugs and alcohol? Bodmer said it's common for people to lie to their physician, but it's not smart. "The things I ask patients about are intended to help them," he said. "I'm not looking to turn them over to the police. I just want to guide them to good health."



LATE 20s

Between 26 and 29, men tend to be in monogamous relationships, or are married and thinking of starting a family. Their priorities shift and they start to consider their own mortality, especially if they have kids.

"Preventive medicine is the focus of treating this age group," Bodmer explained. "We educate our patients on what they can do to prevent problems 20 to 30 years down the road. We go over their family history to discern if there's a history of diabetes or heart problems. In those visits, we also focus on the importance of proper health, getting 30 minutes of exercise a day, eating healthy foods, and avoiding too much booze and caffeine."



30 to 40

Men in their thirties have generally transitioned out of the party phase, and are more serious about advancing in their careers and dealing with home life.

"Again, the focus is on preventive care," Bodmer said. "At about age 35, patients who are obese and/or inactive will receive some blood screening to check their cholesterol to detect possible early heart disease. We'll also take an EKG of their heart, checking blood pressures and heart rates."

This also is a period where physicians will begin to screen for depression.

"Depression is especially common in the Pacific Northwest," he said. "I'll ask whether they have problems sleeping, and gauge their job and home life satisfaction. Much of depression in Oregon is a seasonal disorder. I recommend vitamin D supplements, and we'll recommend happy lights to boost people's moods. With others, I recommend meeting with a counselor or psychologist. Otherwise, pharmaceuticals can be beneficial, but in general, I try not to rely on medications."

In addition, those over age 30 should have an annual physical.



40s

"The forties are when we start to see health conditions cropping up," according to Bodmer. "Younger men can get away with a poor diet, partying and a lack of exercise, but this age is when it starts to catch up with them."

Patients get a yearly physical and their doctor will reevaluate family histories, particularly if a brother or another first-degree relative has developed prostate, colon, skin or lung cancers.

"We examine the skin to look for lesions, and we recommend a blood screen to evaluate cholesterol on a yearly



50s

Getting a colonoscopy is almost a rite of passage when turning 50. It's also when long-time smokers will receive screening tests for lung cancers. In addition, patients will tend to show more signs of skin cancer, so they also receive a full skin check.

basis," Bodmer explained. "The patient may need a colonoscopy if his family history suggests it."

It's also time to bend over, bear down and have that prostate exam each year.

"Oregonians have the highest rate of skin cancer in the nation," Bodmer said. "I also find that there are higher incidents of depression due to job or marital dissatisfaction, and family pressures. I like to talk about mental health, and the importance of releasing stress through yoga, meditation, exercise or picking up a new hobby."

MODERN AILMENTS

What about those new ailments trumpeted on the telly, especially this new, mystery ailment called "low T?" Commercials seek to drive concern among consumers that fatigue, loss of muscle mass and a lower libido could mean that men don't have enough testosterone.

"This is where I get on my soapbox," Bodmer said. "The symptoms of fatigue, lower libido and loss of muscle mass are due to the natural process of aging. This is just another example of the drug companies trying to get extra money. Consider the fact that the increase in ads for low T have increased four-fold in just two years."

In addition, it could put men's health at risk. "I do not recommend extra testosterone as a routine because it binds to fat in the body," he said. "It increases the risk of prostate cancer, heart disease, stroke and heart attacks."

What Bodmer does recommend are vaccinations for tetanus, pneumonia (at age 65) and shingles (at age 60). In addition, every year, between October and February, get a flu shot. It sure beats being on your back for a week, sicker than a dog.

Deston Nokes is a travel and business writer. destonnokes.com



JUNE EVENT:

Saturday, June 28 at Beaverton Kohl's

11055 SW Canyon Rd. Beaverton

9 to 11:30 a.m.

Kohl's Car Seat Outreach Project

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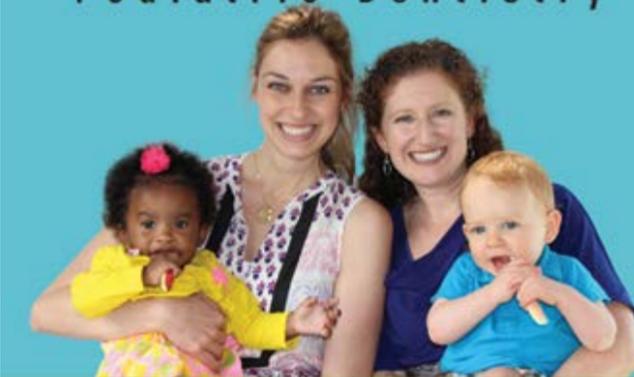
Let's make sure. Bring your car seats in your family vehicle to one of our free car seat check up events.



To find out when and where a car seat check up event is happening in your community, please visit Doernbecher's Tom Sargent Safety Center website at www.ohsu.edu/childsafety or call 503 494-3735.



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