

Men's Health Month is celebrated across the country with screenings, health fairs, health education and outreach activities. We celebrate it as an **effort to heighten the awareness of preventable health problems and encourage** early detection and treatment of disease among men and boys. This month gives health care providers, public policy makers, the media, and individuals an opportunity to **encourage men to seek regular medical advice** and early treatment for disease and injury.

Facts and Statistics on Diseases Affecting Men

Prostate Cancer

You should know what your prostate is and what it does. Over 30 million men suffer from prostate conditions that impact their quality of life. **Each year over 230,000 men** will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and about 30,000 will die from it.

Here are more facts:

- **1 in 7 men will be** diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime.
- Some men are at higher risk than others.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that men with a brother, father, or son who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer **are 2 to 3 times more likely** to develop prostate cancer.

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is a big problem.

One in every three adult Americans — about 65 million people — have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. Many more are at risk of developing it. Over half of all Americans age 60 and older have it. And over a lifetime, **the risk of developing high blood pressure** is 90%. Typically, blood pressure increases with age. Risk of high blood pressure begins to climb when men hit age 45, although it can occur in younger men. **Obesity or a family history of high blood pressure** also increases risk. High blood pressure is especially dangerous, **because people can have it for years without knowing**. In fact, one in three Americans with the condition doesn't know it. However, despite these gloomy statistics, high blood pressure is not inevitable. There is **a lot you can do to prevent, delay, and treat** the condition.

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a serious sleep disorder that occurs when a person's breathing is interrupted during sleep. People with untreated sleep apnea stop breathing repeatedly during their sleep, sometimes hundreds of times. **This means the brain — and the rest of the body — may not get enough oxygen**.

There are **two types of sleep apnea**:

- Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA): The more common of the two forms of apnea, it is **caused by a blockage of the airway**, usually when the soft tissue in the back of the throat collapses during sleep.

- **Central sleep apnea:** Unlike OSA, the airway is not blocked, but **the brain fails to signal the muscles** to breathe, due to instability in the respiratory control center.

Am I at Risk for Sleep Apnea?

Sleep apnea **can affect anyone at any age. However**, typical risk factors for sleep apnea include:

- Being male
- Having a family history of obesity or being overweight
- Being over age 40
- A large neck size (17 inches or greater in men and 16 inches or greater in women)
- Large tonsils, a large tongue, or a small jaw bone
- Having a family history of sleep apnea
- Gastroesophageal reflux, or GERD
- Nasal obstruction due to a deviated septum, allergies, or sinus problems

In addition, untreated sleep apnea **may be responsible for poor performance in everyday activities, such as** fatigue at work and school, motor vehicle crashes, and academic underachievement in children and adolescents.

In recognition of Men's Health Month, we urge you to stay on top of your health! If your yearly check-up is overdue, this is a great time to make that appointment. Take care of your health, men!

June is all about the guys. There's Father's Day just around the corner, and **Men's Health Week** coming up. So, this month is a great time to take a moment and reflect on the lives and health of men. Men face specific challenges when it comes to all aspects of health — they're less likely to see a doctor when they're sick. In addition, **mental health concerns often take a backseat** to work and family obligations. Unfortunately, there's a fair amount of pressure on **men to tough out any health concerns** they may have. This can mean that if they do end up on the exam table, they're likely to play down what's really going on.

Convincing men to take physical and mental health 'red flags' seriously means leaping over a few hurdles thrown up by societal gender perceptions, and that goes double for sleep. As a whole, we're all more likely **to write sleep off as something that's nice to have**, not something we need. Of course, the opposite is true. And guys? If you don't get enough sleep often enough, it can mess with your body and head in some really serious ways.

Four Ways Sleep Deprivation Can Affect Men's Health

1. Your body's immune weakens.

This is true for everyone, but important for men to pay attention to. There is plenty of research and documentation showing the production of cells responsible for **fighting off bugs — T-cells — decreases when we skimp** on sleep. Furthermore, toss in the fact that **the production of inflammatory cellular agents — cytokines — starts increasing even after just one night of poor**

sleep. Hence, it's easy to see how weeks of tossing and turning can mean more head colds, chest coughs, and sick days.

2. Chronic sleep deprivation means serious cardiovascular problems.

Sleep is serious business. And when we don't seriously try to get enough of it, we put ourselves at **further risk for conditions like diabetes, stroke, and heart attack.** Again, that can be true for men and women, but **men are at much higher risk for sleep disorders** like obstructive sleep apnea. The way these disorders impact heart and brain function can go on to put men at further risk for common killers like cardiovascular disease.

3. Men who sleep less often weigh more.

Hormones, how they work, and how we react to them are all aspects of the endocrine system. **Testosterone** isn't the only thing affected when we don't have good sleep. But when it comes to men's health, it is **a pretty big red flag. Having less of it means** having a much harder time maintaining a healthy weight. These same metabolic risk factors can also contribute to being at **higher risk for diabetes.** Worst of all, the **weight gain leads to sleep apnea,** which can in turn lead to an even steeper drop in testosterone levels.

4. Insomnia has a startling link to cancers more likely to affect men.

We're only just now beginning to scratch the surface of how sleep health impacts our cancer risk as a whole. But we do know two disturbing things already.

The first is that men who do shift work without napping during the day are **43% more likely to be diagnosed with cancer** later and are twice as likely to die as a result.

Another study, that followed over 400,000 American men over three decades, found that men who reported getting **three to five hours of sleep consistently were over 50% more likely to die of prostate cancer** when compared to men who reported getting seven hours or more each night.

If you care about men's health for the men in your life, then you should also care about men's sleep health. As we approach Father's Day, not only should we celebrate all the awesome fathers in our families, but it's also a perfect time to reflect on the health of the men we know and love!

As we continue our discussion of Better Sleep Month for May, let's review the five most common sleep **myths that lead to the vicious cycle of confusion and sleep loss.** And with this, we will **reveal the truth behind them** so we can all get some better sleep!

Sleep Myth #1: Getting eight hours of sleep is a luxury.

Reality:

Sleeping is a **necessary part of being happy and healthy** — and there is nothing luxurious about that! Getting the recommended eight hours of sleep per night will help you to look and feel better, stay healthier, and perform at your peak. Who doesn't want that?

Sleep Myth #2: Losing sleep occasionally isn't fun, but it's not having any real impact on my health.

Reality:

Losing out on even **one hour of sleep, one night a week has been proven to increase your risk of** having a heart attack, developing Type 2 diabetes, becoming obese, or even suffering from depression. All sleep counts and a lack thereof will always impact your health, whether you see it immediately or not.

Sleep Myth #3: To cure drowsy driving, just wind down the window and turn on some music.

Reality:

Sleep related automobile accidents are an enormous problem around the world. In the U.S., a nationwide survey found that 60% of Americans said they had driven while feeling drowsy. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conservatively estimates that **100,000 police reported accidents** are directly caused by driver fatigue. For such a serious issue, there seems to be a **surprising lack of reliable advice** on how to prevent accident like these. Scientists have found that although a blast of **cold air on your face will provide temporary relief** from drowsiness, this may last as little as 15 minutes. **Maintaining a healthy sleep schedule is the only sure and safe remedy** to combat driver fatigue.

Sleep Myth #4: Snoring is harmless.

Reality:

According to the National Sleep Foundation, 32 percent of adults in America suffer from snoring at least a few nights per week. Though sometimes benign, **loud and chronic snoring can also be a symptom** of other issues, such as **obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)**. OSA is characterized by pauses in breathing while asleep – which are caused by **the airways becoming blocked**. If left undiagnosed, OSA can reduce blood oxygen levels and put strain on the heart and respiratory systems, increasing the **risk of high blood pressure, stroke and even a heart attack**.

Sleep Myth #5: 1: Sleep is a passive activity.

Reality:

For a long time sleep was considered the body's 'down-time' – an absence of consciousness. But sleep is very much an active state within the body and brain. It is truly a beautiful and complex sequence of events, as it follows a regular, cyclical pattern every night. Although we remain still and inactive at night, there are **numerous vital processes going on**, of which we are all unaware.

Shocked by the dangers of sleep deprivation and just HOW important getting better sleep is to your health and well-being? **It is our mission to get the info out there** so everyone can see how vital celebrating Better Sleep Month can be. As you make plans for Memorial Day, don't forget to **plan for getting the high-quality sleep you need and deserve**. So, rest up this month and all the others to come!

May is Better Sleep Month! It is recognized for encouraging people to establish better sleeping habits and patterns. Refreshing **sleep is a significant factor in maintaining good health**. The Better Sleep Council (BSC) supports Better Sleep Month. It aims to raise awareness about the benefits of better sleep and how poor sleep can disrupt our lives.

What Does a Lack of Sleep Do?

Just as a balanced diet and consistent exercise are essential, **sleep is just as crucial to our physical, emotional and mental health**. **Sleep deprivation** has become so prevalent that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls it a **public health epidemic**. Inadequate or a lack of sleep can lead to **an increase in blood pressure and stress hormone production**. The body can become stressed when it does not get enough sleep. As a result, poor sleep can lead to **reduced concentration, mood swings, irritability, stress, and a weakened immune system**. The release of **stress hormones can also make it more difficult to sleep, perpetuating an unhealthy sleep cycle**. In severe cases, poor sleep may be linked to serious problems including narcolepsy, insomnia and sleep apnea. **Better Sleep Month helps to make more people aware** of these problems.

Here are **10 tips** to help you get the most out of your 40 winks:

Tips for Better Sleep

1. Cut caffeine

If you're having trouble sleeping, it's important to reduce, if not eliminate, caffeine in your diet. If you can't give it up entirely, at least try to **stay away from caffeine four to six hours within your bedtime** (half of the caffeine you take in at after 5 pm is still in your body at 11). A simple 24 hours won't make a drastic difference, but within a few days of getting rid of caffeine, you should notice that you're sleeping better.

2. Limit alcohol

Although some may rely on a glass of wine or two to help them go to sleep, **alcohol can also alter your sleep patterns and the quality of your sleep**. And once your alcohol level drops, it wakes you up, causing agitation and uneasiness, making it difficult to sleep peacefully for what's left of the night.

3. Stop smoking

Nicotine is a stimulant that can also interrupt your sleep. There are already a thousand reasons you should give up smoking, but just in case you needed another, sleep makes a thousand and one!

4. Eat lightly

The "itis" may seem like a for-sure sleep remedy, but in reality, a heavy meal before bed is no good – for your health or sleep! So, **if you must eat before bed, do so lightly and avoid** any foods that might cause stomach trouble such as **spicy, fatty or fried foods**. Here is a recent post for healthy eating ideas!

5. Set a schedule

Your body needs to get in the habit of going to bed and waking up at certain times. Set yourself a **strict schedule to follow daily**. After about a week of following this routine, your body will re-condition to your new sleep patterns.

6. Establish a routine

Along with establishing regular, consistent bedtimes and wake-up times, set up a soothing bedtime routine. Plan a **relaxing routine** for the 30-60 minutes **before bed**. This won't be the same for everyone, of course, so do what feels best for you. Whatever the routine may be, **make sure it does not include screens**. Blue light will interfere with your sleep and your body's cues for sleep and all will be lost.

7. Work Out

Adding exercise to your daily regimen **helps with** all kinds of things that may interfere with your sleep, **like anxiety and depression**. But it also provides specific physiological boosts to sleep itself. Exercise also **strengthens circadian rhythms**. It **can also stimulate longer periods of slow-wave sleep**, the deepest and most restorative phase of sleep.

8. Keep it Cool

Almost time to snuggle up and get cozy – but wait! Research **suggests a cool bedroom – around 65 degrees, is best** for sleep.

9. Keep it Quiet

Rather you're in a full house or you live in a relatively busy area, **setting the peace and quiet tone for bedtime will always be key** to a calm and relaxed sleep. **Reduce any loud noises** as best you can to help you get into your sleep zone. You can find a variety of devices in stores specifically for this purpose if necessary. And give your eyes a rest, as well as your ears. Cut out those screens at least an hour before bed!

10. Clear any clutter

Many people **relax more easily when their bedrooms aren't cluttered** and full of distractions. So, try going minimalist in your bedroom to keep your head and space clear of unnecessary interruptions.

Commit to **trying at least a few of these options** for a week to get some better rest! Sweet dreams!

Everyone feels stress. But so few of us actually think about “what” stress really is. By definition, **stress is the bodily or mental tension** resulting from factors that tend to alter an existent equilibrium. It's a perception of a real or imagined threat to your body or your ego. All that tells us is **stress is a thought**. That's it. No more, no less. And as a result, **we have complete control over stress, because** it's not something that happens to us but **something**

that happens in us. In order to overcome stress, you have to change your thoughts and your perception on certain circumstances. When you feel that urge coming on, slow yourself down and relax.

Here are five ways to help you slow it down and relax:

Move

The best way to **burn off the stress hormones without having to change your thinking** is to move and sweat. Run, dance, jump, ride, swim, stretch, or skip. Just do something vigorous and lively. We know that **moving releases serotonin**, the hormone that regulates stress, anxiety and even depression. So even a brisk walk will get you back on the right track by not letting stress conquer all.

Breathe

Most of us hold our breath often or breathe shallow, anxious breaths, especially when we feel stressed. Deep, slow, full breaths have a profound effect on resetting the stress response, because the **relaxation nerve goes through your diaphragm and is activated with every deep breath**. Take five deep breaths now and observe how differently you feel after.

Bathe

For the lazy among us a MEGA bath is a secret weapon against stress. How do you have a **MEGA bath**, you ask? **Add 2 cups of Epsom salt, a half-cup of baking soda, and 10 drops of lavender oil to a very hot bath**. Then, add one stressed human and soak for 20 minutes. Guaranteed to induce relaxation.

Sleep

Stress and sleep have a two-way relationship.

High stress levels can make sleeping more difficult and can even lead to sleep disorders. A lack of sleep increases stress hormones. But, if you are getting the sleep you need, you have a better control on health issues like blood pressure and cholesterol.

So, get your eight hours **NO MATTER WHAT!** Take a nap if you missed your sleep. Prioritize sleep.

Think Differently.

Practice the art of noticing stress, **noticing how your thinking makes you stressed**. Practice taking deep breaths and letting go of worry. Relax your mind and shift your thoughts positively. For some people, changing from thinking negatively is a very difficult task, and will take more time and work than others. But **with consistence and persistence, we can wire our brains to take a step back** and look at a problem before we stress out.

We hope these five tips help you in your quest to be stress-free. But if you practice them, even getting a good night's sleep, and still feel tired the next day, it could be sleep apnea.

Does your partner snore and it's interrupting your sleep at night?

Do you feel tired during the day as a result?

Have you been wondering how to talk to your partner about their snoring?

Well, the best time to approach your partner about their snoring is NOW. **The problem isn't going to magically disappear** nor will it be resolved on its own. Every night your partner's snoring wakes you, it's also damaging your health and throwing a wrench into the quality of your life. The sooner the problem is addressed and resolved, the sooner you can start living better and sleeping peacefully. So, here are four quick tips on how to talk to your partner about snoring:

Be Calm and Understanding

Your partner isn't snoring on purpose. You, of course, already know this; but **it can be hard to remember when you're tired, frustrated** and wanting to communicate with them about this issue. Snoring can interfere with your quality of life in a very real way and this can cause your nerves to get a little frayed, which is perfectly natural. Your partner's sleep probably isn't high quality either, leaving them also very sleep-deprived and irritable. **When neither of you is rested, having a constructive conversation regarding a sensitive matter can become a difficult task.** So, before you begin any conversation about snoring, try to get to a place where you feel completely calm. Keep in mind that your partner:

- *Isn't snoring on purpose.*
- *May not be aware of the impact their snoring is having on your life and your rest.*
- **May be embarrassed about their snoring.**

Reminding yourself of all these before you start the conversation can help you focus on the real reason for bringing up the issue in the first place: the need for some resolution.

Present a Solution

Your partner's first impulse, when you bring up this sensitive topic, might be to think you are complaining. To avoid this potentially defensive behavior, **strictly focus on the solution.** This takes the weight of the conversation off their snoring and **focuses on something positive** – a resolution for you both to get better sleep.

Before beginning the conversation, compose a list of solutions and suggestions. When you're outlining these, make a note of each of the following:

- *What are the benefits?*
- *What are some of the drawbacks?*
- *Is there anything you can do to make the drawbacks easier to deal with?*
- *What's most important to your partner?*
- *What steps are needed?*

The more clarity each solution offers, the easier it is for you and your partner to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Again, this keeps the focus on how to make things better, **rather than going in with an attack or criticism.**

Remind Your Partner Why This is Important

This is more than a matter of preferences or minor complaints. Snoring can impair your quality of life and your partner's quality of life. **Sleep deprivation can pose profound consequences to your health.** From heart attack to stroke, years of poor-quality sleep could be damaging your health. The sooner you act, the sooner you can live a healthier life.

It's true for both you and your partner. Not to mention all the smaller, **day-to-day problems with interrupted sleep**, which can include:

- *Irritability*
- *Trouble concentrating*
- *Lack of focus*
- *Interpersonal problems at home and at work*

And, **all of these things deserve resolving.**

Be Ready for Compromise

Snoring can be an embarrassing subject for many people. **Be prepared for some resistance and be patient.** You may find **focusing on one step at a time** is more effective for your situation, rather than overwhelming your partner with an entire process. You may also need to compromise on the type of treatment for snoring, depending on the underlying causes and your partner's preferences. **There are many types of snoring treatments out there.** The best treatment is the one that works for the individual in question. You may find that figuring out what works for your partner is a process of trial and error. Ultimately, your partner needs to decide on what treatment is most suitable.