



Supporting men's health

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Workplace
Health and Wellbeing **Academy**

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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men die,
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¹National life tables – life expectancy in the UK: 2018 to 2020. Office for National Statistics.

²Baker, Peter, et al. "The men's health gap: men must be included in the global health equity agenda."



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 nurse³ or HR.⁴ 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.⁴

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

³Occupational health. Chartered Institute of Personnel Development www.cipd.co.uk published 04 June 2020.

⁴People 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 not pushing themselves too hard at work. Encourage taking breaks, switching off emails after hours and help people to prioritise their workloads.⁴

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

⁵Gender and mental health at work. Business in the Community.

⁶Suicides in England and Wales: 2021 registrations.

⁷Depression and men. Royal College of Psychiatrists.



Around
3 in 4
people who
die by suicide
are men.⁶

Cancer awareness

Men are more likely to get cancer, and sadly, more likely to die from it.⁸ We know that men are less likely to seek help for cancer symptoms,⁹ but we also know cancer that's detected earlier is easier to treat.¹⁰

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.

Men are less likely to seek help for cancer symptoms.⁹

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.*

⁸Cancer statistics. World Cancer Research Fund.

⁹Macleod, Una, et al. "Risk factors for delayed presentation and referral of symptomatic cancer: evidence for common cancers."

¹⁰The Cancer Awareness in the Workplace programme. Cancer Research UK.

*Cancer incidence for common cancers. Cancer Research UK.





Stopping smoking

Men are more likely to smoke than women.¹¹ 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.¹²
- Consider developing a smoking cessation policy.¹²

Eating healthier

Men in the UK tend to eat too much salt and saturated fat and not enough fruit and vegetables.¹³ Eating well is not only good for wellbeing, it also helps people be more focused and productive at work.¹⁴

- Encourage people to take a lunch break away from their desk.¹⁵
- 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.¹⁵
- Think about the types of foods provided at in-person meetings.¹⁵

Meeting snacks.

Are you offering enough healthy options?

¹¹Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2021. www.ons.gov.uk Office for National Statistics.

¹²Smoking: workplace interventions. National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (NICE).

¹³Men. British Nutrition Foundation.

¹⁴BDA Work Ready Programme. British Dietetic Association.

¹⁵Physical 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.¹⁶ Exercise can be great for both mental and physical health. It can help people to feel happier, get fitter and manage their stress.¹⁷

- Promote any exercise programmes that are available through work and consider offering classes that are just for those who identify as male.¹⁸
- Allow people to attend any virtual meetings by phone so that they can move around while talking.¹⁵
- 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.¹⁵

Team events.

**Are they always focused around drinking?
Mix it up.**

Managing alcohol

Men are more likely to drink excess alcohol² than women. This can be a problem for physical and mental health, as well as cause problems at work.¹⁶

- Try to encourage people to get help if they need it.¹⁶
- Don't base work events around alcohol if possible.¹⁹
- Make sure people know that even a small amount of alcohol can affect the safety of using heavy machinery or completing other dangerous tasks.¹⁶

¹⁵Physical activity, healthy eating and healthier weight: a toolkit for employers. Business in the Community.

¹⁶Physical activity. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

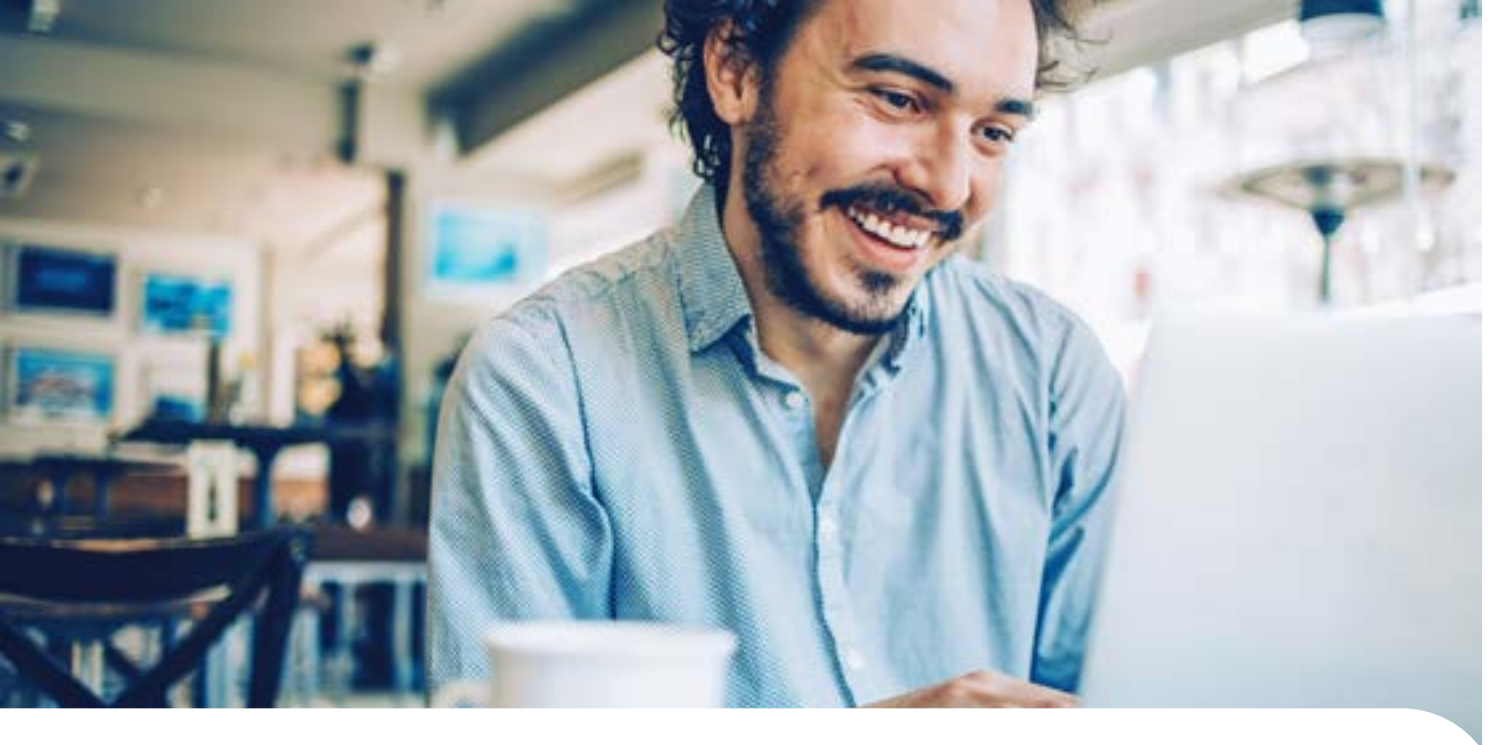
¹⁷How can physical activity help my mental health?

¹⁸Bottofff, Joan L., et al. "An updated review of interventions that include promotion of physical activity for adult men."

¹⁹Alcohol in the workplace. Alcohol Change.

*Statistics on Alcohol, England, 2020 [PAS]. NHS Digital.





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 focusses on wellbeing so that people feel they can talk about their health in an inclusive and non-judgemental environment.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.²¹



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

²⁰Employee health and well-being: Recommendations for employers. Chartered Institute of Personnel Development.

²¹People 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/benefits-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

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4. **People managers’ guide to mental health.** Chartered Institute of Personnel Development www.cipd.co.uk published September 2018
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