

# Why do men hate going to the doctor?

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A national survey found that women were three times more likely to see a doctor on a regular basis than men. Even though men on average die younger than women and have higher mortality rates for heart disease, cancer, stroke and AIDS, trying to get a man to a doctor can be harder than pulling teeth. So, why do men hate it so?

“There could be as many answers to that question as male patients that I see, but more often than not it’s that it’s not a priority for them,” said Timothy Vavra, DO, Loyola University [Health](#) System physician and associate professor of internal medicine at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. “They’re not willing to make a lifestyle change, so they think it’s a waste of time listening to a doctor tell them to change the way they eat, to start exercising and stop smoking if they’re not going to do it anyway.”

According to Vavra, this thinking doesn’t add up. The longer a person puts off seeing a doctor, the more likely they’ll have to see a doctor on a regular basis.

“Prevention isn’t 100 percent, but we can address issues and keep an eye out for warning signs,” Vavra said. “I have patients that if they would’ve seen me more regularly, we could have made little changes that would have helped prevent them from having a medical crisis that resulted in a complete lifestyle change.”

He suggests men go to a physician and establish care when they are young and healthy so there is a base line of vital statistics like blood

pressure. This helps the physician and patient know when things are heading in the wrong direction. It's not only a sound investment for your health, but for your finances.

“If you wait until you have a health crisis, it's no longer preventive care, it's secondary care and that may include surgery and/or hospital stay. Instead of making a simple change in diet and lifestyle, a person will have to make significant changes and often be on medications,” Vavra said.

Having to see specialists, paying for procedures and taking daily medications can really affect a person's financial health. In addition, many health insurance companies offer financial incentives for staying on top of health conditions and adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Other than having a health problem of their own, often what prompts men to action is a health crisis in someone with whom they can relate.

“When Bill Clinton had his heart attack, my office schedule was suddenly filled with men who wanted to talk about heart health,” Vavra said. “When men see someone that resembles themselves having a health issue, they often start paying attention.”

Everyone is busy and for many men the time going to a doctor can feel like a waste of a precious resource. Still, Vavra says going to the doctor is one of the best things a man can do for his family.

“A man may feel selfish or weak going to the doctor or caring for his health, but it makes a positive impact on the whole family. Kids look to their parents for examples of how to live. So lead by example. If you live a healthy life, so will your kids,” Vavra said.

Here are a few screenings every man should get:

- High blood pressure. Every man age 18 or older should have his blood pressure checked at least once a year.
- Diabetes. Men with risk factors such as a family history of diabetes, being overweight or experiencing diabetic symptoms should be screened with a fasting blood test. This test measures the amount of a sugar called glucose in the blood. Normal is less than 100 milligrams per deciliter; 101 to 125 is prediabetic and above 125 indicates the patient is diabetic.
- Cholesterol. Men ages 20 to 35 who have cardiovascular disease risk factors such as diabetes should be screened. After age 35, men should be screened once every five years if normal, or more often if levels are borderline.
- Colorectal cancer. Men should be screened beginning at age 50. The gold standard is a colonoscopy. A doctor uses a slender, lighted tube to examine the entire colon. A colonoscopy can find and remove precancerous growths called polyps. If a colonoscopy is normal, it's good for 10 years. Other screening exams include a yearly fecal occult blood test (which can find blood in the stool), or every five years, a fecal blood test combined with an exam called a sigmoidoscopy, which examines the lower part of the colon.
- Prostate cancer. [Men](#) ages 50 or older who have a life expectancy of at least 10 years should get annual PSA tests and digital rectal exams.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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