

Guys, take the health check up a notch

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(HealthDay)—Though preventive wellness visits are the cornerstone of good health, a third of American men don't even have a primary care doctor.

You need checkups, even if you feel healthy, because conditions like [high blood pressure](#) and high cholesterol don't have symptoms but are serious risk factors for heart disease.

For men, the key goals of wellness visits are to let your doctor screen for health issues, assess your risk for future problems, encourage a healthy lifestyle and update your vaccinations. They also let you get to know your health-care provider in case you do get sick.

Your doctor will review your medical history and ask about close relatives—parents, grandparents and siblings. The physical exam generally includes such things as measuring your blood pressure and your [body mass index](#).

It's never too soon for a man to start thinking about heart health. The American Heart Association recommends a baseline blood test at about age 20. Called a lipoprotein profile, it measures cholesterol and triglycerides, which are fat components in your blood. How often it needs to be repeated depends on your results and any [risk factors](#) you might have.

Use your wellness appointment to talk about good lifestyle habits—eating a heart-healthy diet, getting more exercise if you spend too many hours on the sofa watching sports instead of participating in them, quitting if you smoke, limiting alcohol and avoiding sexually transmitted diseases if you're not in a monogamous relationship. Also bring up any mental [health issues](#) you may be experiencing.

Finally, you might need booster shots of childhood vaccines, as well as the yearly flu shot.

More information: The U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services has more on [how men can take charge of their health](#).

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