

Survey shows American men are less healthy than they believe

September 7 2023, by Dennis Thompson



Most American men think they're leading a healthy lifestyle, possibly

picturing themselves as a Hollywood leading man type.

But their actual health habits are those of a less healthy sidekick, a new Cleveland Clinic survey reveals.

The [national poll](#) found that four out of five (81%) American men believe they are leading a [healthy lifestyle](#). But nearly half do not get a yearly physical (44%) and do not take care of their mental health (44%), researchers found.

Only half said they follow a [healthy diet](#) (51%), and about a quarter (27%) admit to being couch potatoes who watch TV more than five hours a day, on average.

"What they found was that the majority of men in the survey really felt like they were living a very healthy lifestyle," said Dr. Raevti Bole, a urologist with the Center for Men's Health in the Glickman Urological & Kidney Institute at the Cleveland Clinic. "But when you ask some of those more specific questions and got them to think about it, they found that some of those behaviors weren't in alignment with what they had initially thought about how healthy their lifestyles were."

Cleveland Clinic issued the survey as part of its eighth annual MENTION educational campaign. The campaign is meant to draw attention to the fact that men often do not mention health issues or take steps to prevent them.

For example, 83% of men said that they've experienced stress in the past six months, the poll found. Despite this, two out of three (65%) said they are hesitant to seek professional help for [mental health concerns](#) such as stress, anxiety and depression.

"It's important for men to recognize that stress is something everyone's

going through and that is something that can affect them physically," said Bole, who was not part of the survey. "It can actually be associated with different sorts of physical health conditions, like [high] blood pressure or even development of diabetes or [weight gain](#)."

"Emotional health and mental health is not just something that is in your head. It can affect physical parts of your health as well," Bole continued.

One mental health expert also stressed the mind-body connection.

"In so many ways, men seem interested in their health, they go to the gym, they bulk up with their protein shakes, they maintain a mean, lean, protein-packed diet," said Jennifer Thompson, director of communications at Men's Health Network. "In so many other ways, men are seemingly disillusioned, uninformed and absent in their consideration for their overall health."

"A man that is having a hard time with his [mental health](#) is less likely to care for his surroundings, hygiene and overall health," she explained. "A man that doesn't focus on eating right or going to the gym could fall into mental despair. The ties between mental acuity and [physical fitness](#) are further compounded from the resulting pandemic, an issue that has, in a positive way, brought to light the ways men and boys are struggling deeply with the pressures and solitude," Thompson added.

Not only that, but the disconnect between perceived health and actual lifestyle likely worsens as men age, Bole said.

"Life happens slowly, you know," Bole said. "Because the way that life just happens, you don't get to even thinking about some of these specific things until someone asks you."

"I think as guys get older, they don't necessarily think of a symptom

they're having as being a sign of a disease or they don't necessarily think that changes that they've made to their lifestyle are necessarily causing problems," Bole said. "So, perhaps the symptoms that they're having or the lifestyles that they're living are so gradual that they don't necessarily feel like they're going into a sort of situation that's going to cause issues."

That's why it's vitally important for men to get an annual checkup, Bole said.

Beyond prompting a rethink of their lifestyle, a checkup also provides a chance for necessary screenings to catch and treat chronic illnesses like diabetes, high blood pressure and even cancer.

Only about half of American men have been screened for common cancers, including prostate, colon, skin, testicular and bladder, the survey found.

"It's pretty difficult as just a regular person who's not in the medical field to remember what age to get what screening," Bole said. "That's why it's really important to go to that annual and get that screening, because a health care professional is going to take care of that for you, is going to remember based on your age and your risk category, family history, what you're due for and when."

So, how to get men to remember to take care of themselves?

Well, they're men, noted Bole—so sex might be the answer.

More than one out of every three American men (37%) have experienced issues related to [sexual health](#), the survey found. However, only two in five of these men have sought professional health.

"Many, many guys are concerned about sexual wellness and sexual

health," Bole said. "I think one way to get guys invested in preventative care is to talk about it in terms of things that are important to them, like sexual health.

"You can kind of tie in, well, these are the ways in which getting your annual checkup and managing your condition might actually help your sexual health and prevent some of these common sexual concerns," Bole continued. "That might be enough to get guys to go and get checked out."

Other findings of note from the survey included:

- Fathers are more likely to declare they are living a healthy lifestyle (87%) than non-parents (80%).
- Men spend an average 2.3 hours each day scrolling social media.
- Those men hesitant to seek professional health for mental [health issues](#) are almost twice as likely to spend 5 or more hours daily on [social media](#).
- 54% of American men are not satisfied with their current weight, and 50% declare they are actively working on achieving their goal weight.
- Only about half (56%) of men realize that drinking may affect sexual health, and even fewer (43%) are aware of the negative sexual impact of smoking.
- Stress is the most commonly mentioned factor impacting sexual health (68%). Age (65%) and excessive weight (61%) follow closely.

The [online survey](#) involved a national sample of 1,000 American males 18 and older living in the continental United States. It was conducted between June 1 and June 13.

The total male sample surveyed was nationally representative, and the

margin of error for the total sample at the 95% confidence level is +/- 3.1 percentage points.

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Citation: Survey shows American men are less healthy than they believe (2023, September 7) retrieved 28 April 2024 from

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