



# Health, Her Way

WHEN IT COMES TO STAVING OFF SICKNESS, MEN CAN LEARN A LOT FROM WOMEN

"Men consistently misperceive their level of risk," says psychologist Will Courtenay, Ph.D., author of *Dying to Be Men*. And that misperception can allow serious ailments to go undetected. Even when something's clearly wrong, guys sometimes endure the pain; studies find men are more likely than women to ignore a medical problem. Man up and take a cue from the softer sex. —CATHRYNE KELLER

## Doctor visits

**THE FACTS** Men are twice as likely as women are to say they haven't seen a doctor in the past year, according to a 2010 CDC survey. Men also lag behind women in visits to their dentists.

**THE TAKEAWAY** For women, the annual gynecological exam becomes routine. "That's just part of being a woman," says Courtenay. "There is no corollary for men. We don't take our sons to the doctor every year and say, 'You know, it's really

important that you talk with your doctor about your health.'" But we should. Call your primary-care doc and schedule a physical. Have the blood tests. You know the drill. Going once a year won't kill you; going less often might.

## Diet

**THE FACTS** More women than men eat two or more fruits a day (36 percent vs. 29 percent) and three or more vegetables a day (31 percent vs. 21 percent), a CDC survey reports.

**THE TAKEAWAY** Women, being weight conscious, choose low-calorie foods such as vegetables, says Paul Rozin, Ph.D., a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania. The irony: "While women tend to think they're bigger and heavier than they actually are, men often think they're skinnier and lighter than they are," says Courtenay. Plus, men have higher levels of heart-harming LDL cholesterol. They're also more likely to have high blood pressure before age 45, and they have a higher risk of heart disease before age 60. The fix? A 2011 Greek study suggests a Mediterranean diet rich in fish, nuts, produce, and olive oil.

## Mental health

**THE FACTS** Of people with major depression, women are nearly three times as likely as men to seek professional help (75 percent vs. 26 percent), according to a 2012 study in *Depression and Anxiety*.

**THE TAKEAWAY** "Women are more likely to talk about their emotional problems, while men are socialized to be stoic and avoid showing weakness," says Linda Carli, Ph.D., a senior psychology lecturer at Wellesley College. Men also may be less likely to recognize behaviors like anger and irritability as signs of underlying depression, Courtenay says. Psychological pain is just as legitimate as physical pain; if you broke your arm, you'd wear a cast. Find a therapist who can help.

## Skin cancer

**THE FACTS** By the time 2012 draws to a close, 44,250 men will be newly diagnosed with melanoma and 6,060 will have died, the American Cancer Society estimates.

**THE TAKEAWAY** Women, being weight conscious, choose low-calorie foods such as vegetables, says Paul Rozin, Ph.D., a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania. The irony: "While women tend to think they're bigger and heavier than they actually are, men often think they're skinnier and lighter than they are," says Courtenay. Plus, men have higher levels of heart-harming LDL cholesterol. They're also more likely to have high blood pressure before age 45, and they have a higher risk of heart disease before age 60. The fix? A 2011 Greek study suggests a Mediterranean diet rich in fish, nuts, produce, and olive oil.

## Three Clues That You're Depressed

► Classic signs of depression include losing interest in activities, sleeping too much or too little, and feeling hopeless or worthless. Here are three less obvious symptoms in men, according to Will Courtenay, Ph.D.

### Drinking

**NORMAL** You grab a beer or two with a buddy after a stressful day at work.  
**WARNING SIGN** You drink every day, sometimes alone.

### Aggression

**NORMAL** You can barely resist telling someone off.  
**WARNING SIGN** You can barely resist clocking someone.

### Overworking

**NORMAL** A big project has you logging major hours in the office.  
**WARNING SIGN** Regardless of your workload, you practically live at your desk—hey, it beats having to deal with your life.



Travis Stork, M.D., is an ER physician and host of TV's *The Doctors*.

## THE WORLD OF HURT by Travis Stork, M.D.

**Q** I see a lot of guys opening bathroom doors with their used paper towels. Is this really necessary? It seems a bit much.

Jorge, Chicago, IL

I do it, Jorge. And I'm down to two colds in 5 years. If I had my way, all bathroom doors would open without having to be touched. How many guys don't wash their hands after using the bathroom? And how many do, but then blow their nose in the paper towel before

tossing it? That door handle is probably coated with cold viruses and particles of feces and urine. If you touch it and then rub your eyes, you can get sick. Use a paper towel to grab the handle, or just use your pinkie, which you're not likely to touch your face with.

## HOW CAN I HELP A FRIEND WHO'S JUST BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH SOMETHING TERRIBLE?

Anthony, Santa Barbara, CA  
Ask him how you can help, and be ready to do as much—or as little—as he wants. If he's agreeable, start by helping him find a support network of survivors who've been through the same ordeal. For example, groups like First Descents provide emotional support and hope for cancer patients that a well-meaning friend sometimes can't.