

Your Health Matters

WHY MEN DON'T GO TO THE DOCTOR

I recently experienced the heartbreaking truth that even the strongest men can have their health fail in a moment. One of the most difficult times in my life, was when I knew something was wrong with my husband, Chuck, and he refused to go to see a physician. I finally had to call 911 to get Chuck the medical help I knew he needed.

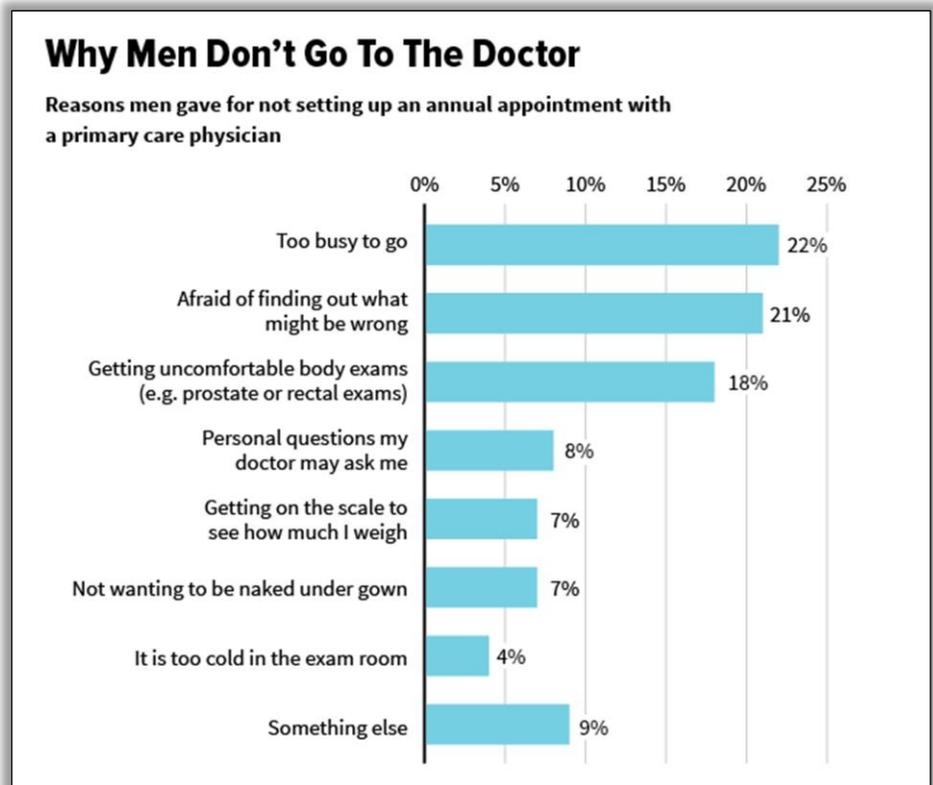
For men who suffer a stroke or get a new diagnosis of cancer, life changes instantly. Many of the health risks that men face can be prevented and treated with earlier diagnosis, yet men are less likely to visit a health care provider than women are. Men are 24% less likely to go to the doctor than a woman.

Why are men reluctant to go to the doctor or seek medical treatment? We have a cultural script about masculinity that tells men they need to be tough, brave, strong and self-reliant. It's exemplified in phrases like "be a man" and "man up". Men learn from an early age if they don't act in this tough, masculine way they lose their status and respect as men.

There is nothing weak about being the healthiest you can be. June is Men's Health Month – a good time to reflect on your lifestyle choices and how your health impacts the people you care about. It's time to take action! Prevent, monitor and take control of your health.

Men can prevent many health issues by living a healthy lifestyle that includes 7-9 hours of sleep each night, healthy food choices, daily physical activity, reducing tobacco use and minimizing stress.

Screening tests are also important to men's health. They can often find diseases early, when they are easier to treat. That's why it is so important for men to schedule regular exams and screenings – for the sake of their own health and their families.



How often should a man go to the doctor anyway?

All men should have an annual blood pressure test and rectal exam. They should get a TB skin test every 5 years and a tetanus booster every 10 years. They should also do monthly self-exams of their testicles, breasts, mouth and skin to look for lumps, lesions, or changing moles or freckles.

Smokers over age 45 should talk to their health care provider about chest x-rays.

Men over 40 should ask about testosterone screening, and men over 60 should ask about bone mineral density testing. All men should talk to their health care provider about STD testing and recommended immunizations.

Men 50 or older need an annual exam, including urinalysis, blood testing, EKG, PSA blood test, hemocult test, blood pressure and a rectal exam. They should also have colorectal screening every 3-4 years.

Men 40 – 49 years old should have an exam every two years, including urinalysis, blood test, hemocult test and EKG.

Men 20-39 should get an exam every three years and should have a baseline EKG done at age 30.

No matter what your age, if you haven't been to the doctor as an adult, go as soon as possible. Your body is all you have, so why not take good care of it.

To learn more about the Harvest Hauler and the other public health programs and services we offer, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at www.montgomerycountyhealth.org or on Facebook or Twitter @healthymoco. We love taking care of your family, and work every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. ■

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Harman".