

Spotlight on: MEN'S HEALTH

Facts and figures surrounding men's health

This month traditionally marks the annual Men's Health Week campaign, which is aimed at raising awareness of the various health issues that affect men in particular. This year, the campaign runs from 10 to 16 June. Here we take a look at some facts and figures surrounding men's health and highlight some foods and supplements that can benefit male health.

According to the Prostate Health Guide (www.prostatehealthguide.com), prostatitis is the most common prostate problem experienced by men under the age of 50. In fact, about 50 per cent of all adult men will be treated for it in their lifetime. Prostatitis is an inflammation of the prostate, the small gland surrounding the urethra, and may be caused by an infection.



Men who work out regularly may benefit from supplementing with the herbs Siberian Ginseng and Maca. These herbs may assist with physical performance and endurance," says Rick Hay, Nutritional Director with Healthista (www.healthista.com). "Siberian Ginseng contains eleutherosides which are phytonutrients that may help to stabilise blood sugar and help with diabetes. Maca contains iron and B vitamins to help with natural energy production. Siberian Ginseng also has been used as an immune booster and belongs to the group of herbs known as adaptogens, so it will help with stress and anxiety too."



Just over three out of four suicides (76 per cent) are committed by men and suicide is the biggest cause of death for men under 35, according to a report by the office for National Statistics. The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) is leading a movement against male suicide. Their website lists signs to watch out for if someone is possibly suicidal and offers tips for how to help someone you may be worried about. Visit www.thecalmszone.net



"Testicular cancer most commonly affects men between the ages of 15 and 45 and, according to Cancer Research UK, is statistically the most common cancer in men aged between 25 and 49 in the UK. Orbid, the male cancer charity, recommends that men perform testicular self-examination on a regular basis, for instance monthly. Anything unusual, such as a lump or swelling in the testicles, should be checked by their GP."



"Gout is predominantly a disease affecting men," says registered nutritionist Sophie Thurner (www.sophie-thurnernutrition.com). "It is essentially chronic arthritis and inflammation in the joints. It is caused when there is too much uric acid in the bloodstream, which leads to a build-up of crystals in the joint. This build-up causes the joint to become inflamed. Uric acid builds up when purines are broken down by the body. Purines are naturally found in our genes, but also in certain foods, such as fish and seafood as well as certain alcohols, which is why diet can greatly affect the onset of gout attacks. In the case of a gout flare-up, including complex carbohydrates (such as whole grains), and lots of other vegetables and fruits, particularly those containing vitamin C (such as bell peppers and berries) can be helpful. Cherries in particular can attenuate the symptoms of gout. A daily omega-3 supplementation has also been shown to be very effective to reduce inflammation."



"Along with a well-rounded, nutrient-rich diet, lycopene is a particularly good addition for male health," says nutritionist Kim Pearson (www.kim-pearson.com). "A potent antioxidant, studies have shown that lycopene has disease-prevention properties, with a particular link to reducing the risk of prostate cancer. Lycopene is a natural pigment and a member of the carotenoid family, which are yellow, orange and red pigments that include beta-carotene. It's found in fruits and vegetables, with the best source being tomatoes and other sources including pink grapefruit, watermelon and guava. Heated tomatoes are, interestingly, a better source (or sauce) of lycopene, since its bioavailability is influenced by heat."

"Sperm health is one of the most important factors in male fertility," explains Sophie Thurner. "Sperm health is highly dependent on health behaviours, such as not smoking, no excessive alcohol intake, habitual food and drink choices, stress management and physical activity. Research suggests that certain foods can particularly promote sperm health. These include oysters and other shellfish, which are high in zinc, which is imperative for male reproductive function. Nuts, particularly Brazil nuts, provide a good source of selenium, which is a key nutrient for the maintenance of male fertility. Salmon and other oily fish are high in omega-3 fatty acids and protein, meaning that they can assist in building healthy sperm. Tomatoes are rich in lycopene and may improve prostate health and function, which can assist in the effectiveness of sperm delivery."

