

As June is Men's Health Month I decided to aim this article toward the men in our congregation (and the women who love them).



I went to the Men's Health Resource Center to start my research. I learned that over 700,000 men are diagnosed with cancer each year and nearly 300,000 die from it, so I decided to focus specifically on cancer in men. I was surprised to learn that about half of all men will develop some sort of cancer at least once. It is known that many of these cancers are preventable. About one third of cancer deaths are caused by smoking while another third are attributed to poor diet combined with lack of exercise. Right there are things that can be corrected to reduce risk. Knowledge is powerful!



Prevention is ideal. Cut tobacco out of your life, drink only in moderation if at all, exercise and eat a low fat, high fiber diet, wear sunscreen, reduce stress in your life and wear your seatbelt. OK, I don't know how seatbelts could prevent cancer but I just wanted to throw that reminder in anyway.



Early cancer detection is also key. Men, you need to have a primary care giver and regular exams. No more excuses! Get to know your own body and have conversations with your care provider if you have lumps, sores that don't heal, or changes in warts or moles. Report any blood in your urine, stool or saliva. A persistent cough, sore throat, hoarseness or difficulty swallowing need to be investigated. Notify your provider if you have unexpected weight loss or a persistent back ache, or any unexplained pain. Fevers that last more than a few days are not normal. Chronic nausea or gas or pressure or tenderness in your chest deserve medical investigation as well.



There are many cancer screenings but let's discuss some that are available for some of the cancers that most often affect men. According to the CDC colonoscopies are recommended beginning at age 50. As I have mentioned before, timely colonoscopies can often give you a chance to have a polyp taken out before it develops into cancer or to remove a cancerous polyp before it invades the colon wall. I'm not going to lie to you. A colonoscopy, along with some other screenings, will put you a bit outside of your comfort zone. However, stopping a disease process in its tracks can eliminate a lot of discomfort later. Regular visits to your provider, at least yearly, are useful for the detection of cancers of the prostate or skin, among others. If you are a smoker or a former smoker, speak with your care provider about low dose CT scans for early detection. Your provider will recommend screening schedules based on your family history, your personal health history, previous screening results and the latest research.



Men, don't make us nag you. Make an appointment to see a physician. Talk about your family health history, your personal health history and any concerns about changes you may have noticed in your own body. Ask about some of the screenings we've discussed here and ask what you need to do in your own situation to obtain or maintain great health. You can do this!

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