

# Tip sheet

## Men's health

By addressing both mental and physical aspects of wellbeing, men can be proactive about their short and long-term health.

### A note on terminology

This tip sheet uses the terms 'men' and 'male', and refers to specific reproductive health; however, these tips should be seen to include all men or related genders.



## Physical health

### Regular exercise

Aim for 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity weekly. Incorporate strength training exercises twice a week to maintain muscle mass and testosterone levels.

### Injuries or illness

In some societies, particularly amongst older generations, men are often expected to play down injuries or physical pain, taking a 'she'll be right' attitude that minimises their discomfort. Not addressing pain or injuries properly can lead to unexpected complications down the line. By looking after your body now, it will support you to achieve your goals and live a longer and healthier life.

### Regular medical check-ups

Schedule regular check-ups for heart health, diabetes and cholesterol. Regular screenings, particularly after age 50, are also important to monitor prostate health and detect any issues early – as 1 in 8 Kiwi men will develop prostate cancer in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

### Reproductive health

Get yourself checked for STIs semi-regularly, particularly when you're sexually active. Remember to always use protection to prevent STI's and unwanted pregnancies, even where there is little-to-no risk of pregnancy.

### Heart health and diabetes

Consume a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. Limit saturated fats and salt to prevent heart disease, which men are often at higher risk for. Be sure to also keep an eye on your sugar intake to avoid developing diabetes, which can lead to erectile dysfunction, incontinence and urinary tract infections.

### Sleep quality

Ensure 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night to aid recovery and maintain overall health. If you're struggling with your sleep, it may be worth exploring whether you have sleep apnoea, which can cause snoring (particularly in men) and increased daytime sleepiness.

### Alcohol and smoking

Action Point NZ<sup>2</sup> highlights that men are nearly twice as likely as women to engage in hazardous drinking, so be sure to limit alcohol intake (and avoid smoking) for your general wellbeing and to reduce the risk of chronic diseases, such as Type 2 Diabetes and cancer.

## Mental health

### Mindfulness and activity

Practise stress-reduction techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or hitting the gym. Physical activity naturally reduces our levels of stress hormones in the body.

### Social connections

Maintain strong relationships with friends and family. Join clubs or groups (whether men-specific or co-ed) to build a support network.

### Seek help

Don't hesitate to seek professional help if you're not feeling yourself or find you are worried, stressed or angry a lot of the time or having trouble sleeping. Talking to a qualified counsellor for some independent advice can be beneficial, as they can help you find some practical strategies on how to manage different situations.

### Work-life balance

Men can often feel pressured to be the main breadwinners in society, which can lead to men seeing the job they do as their identity and who they are as a person. This is why it is important to spend time and enjoy doing other things in your life, and to explore your other skills and abilities. Whenever you can, try and get more balance between your work, home and 'me time' to prevent burnout and maintain your mental wellbeing.

### Hobbies and interests

Engage in hobbies or activities you enjoy to provide mental relaxation and reduce stress.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://prostate.org.nz/useful-links>

## Overall wellbeing

### Self-care

Societal pressures can discourage men from slowing down and taking care of their health and wellbeing. However, looking after yourself is something we all need to get better at. When we learn what helps us to de-stress – and then take action to do it – we just feel better about things in our life. We have more perspective, patience and energy. Make time to tinker in the shed, go to the beach, plan a gaming night, finish a job that needs doing or just get a haircut to change things up.

### Balanced lifestyle

Remember that not every hard call or decision has to be on your shoulders, and your job isn't your whole identity. There's nothing weak about saying no to requests or responsibilities, or asking for advice – none of us have all the answers. Try not to take too much onto yourself and allow others to support you both at work and home. By balancing your efforts, you can de-stress and give yourself more time for the things you enjoy.

### Positive mindset

It's natural to feel angry or upset when things don't go as planned, but working on a positive mindset helps to keep our emotions from boiling over. Try to focus on the present and not regrets of the past; limit your exposure to social media when you aren't feeling great, set small goals that you want to achieve and focus on consistency. Remember – small, consistent efforts will lead to progress.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.actionpoint.org.nz/tags/drinking\\_in\\_new\\_zealand](https://www.actionpoint.org.nz/tags/drinking_in_new_zealand)

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