

Health Matters for Men

Health screenings, disease prevention, nutrition and exercise tips – these are just a few of the reasons to schedule regular visits with a primary care physician and, yet, according to a men’s health survey by the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), more than a quarter of men say they don’t need a physician at this point in their lives. An osteopathic physician discusses why this is not only the wrong idea, but perhaps also a dangerous one.

Results of the AOA survey show that less than 63% of men ages 18 to 29 say they have visited a primary care physician in the past year, compared to more than 85% of men ages 60 or older.

“Even if you feel fine, as many young men do, it is still vitally important to see your health care provider regularly,” says our consulting doctor. “Men who wait too long between routine physicals and who pass on screenings, such as blood pressure or diabetes, miss the opportunity to detect precursors to heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses.”

“Addressing early warning signs is often the easiest and most cost-effective way to stop illness before it starts,” they add. “If you wait until you experience physical symptoms, a disease may be too advanced for effective treatment.”

Our doctor notes that men should visit a primary care physician on a regular basis to:

- **Screen for disease symptoms like high blood pressure and cholesterol levels.** It is recommended that men screen for high blood pressure every two years. Men over 34 should have their cholesterol checked every five years.
- **Assess risk of future medical problems.** Having the opportunity to address warning signs can help prevent chronic illness.
- **Encourage a healthy lifestyle.** Lifestyle changes early on can help reduce the risk of chronic illness or the chances of needing surgery later in life.
- **Update vaccinations.** Your physician can recommend immunizations appropriate for your age group.

- **Maintain a relationship with a doctor in case of an illness.** By establishing a relationship with your physician, he or she will be familiar with your medical history and lifestyle, and better equipped to create a tailored treatment plan for you in case of an illness.

“Osteopathic physicians (DOs), in particular, are trained to consider all the factors that contribute to health and wellness — like work and home environment, activity levels, and stressors — when diagnosing and treating their patients,” says our consulting physician. “DOs also put an emphasis on prevention, so by selecting a DO as your primary care provider, you’ll be ensuring the best in preventive measures throughout the span of your relationship.”

The survey also revealed that the most common reasons given by male respondents for not going to the doctor were that they didn’t think it was necessary or that they had no health insurance.

“If you are avoiding seeing a physician because you don’t know where to start or need help in figuring out your health insurance options, health websites like www.osteopathic.org provide useful steps to selecting a physician,” says our doctor.

“The single most important way you can take care of yourself and those you love is to actively take part in your health care,” says our physician. “Eat a balanced diet, stay physically active, and see your doctor regularly.”

For help finding a DO, patients can use the AOA's Find a DO guide at www.osteopathic.org.

Preventive medicine is just one aspect of care osteopathic physicians (DOs) provide. DOs are fully licensed to prescribe medicine and practice in all specialty areas, including surgery. DOs are trained to consider the health of the whole person and use their hands to help diagnose and treat their patients.