

SECRETS healthy men know

GETTING ON TOP OF YOUR HEALTH IS ALL ABOUT THESE BETTER-FOR-YOU HABITS, PROVEN TO WORK IN YOUR FAVOUR.

Let's start with the good news: Aussie men are relatively healthy by world standards. However, there's still a way to go before their good health matches that of the ladies. Men are more likely to get sick from serious health problems but less likely to visit the doctor*, and the average life expectancy of men in Australia is 80, compared with 84 for women[^]. Ready for more good news? With simple, effective habits like the suggestions on these pages, it's possible to prioritise your wellbeing and help get your health on track.

SWAP... Only visiting a doctor when something feels wrong

WITH... Having an annual check-up with your GP

According to Adelaide-based GP Dr Nick Tellis, many men visit the doctor mainly to address a specific illness or injury. "They get a short, sharp and shiny consultation rather than an in-depth consultation that would deliver more benefits," he says.

Instead, Dr Tellis suggests treating your body like you would your car. "Think of it like an annual check-up, a routine thing that

you just take advantage of. If you only took your car to the mechanic when it was broken, you might expect it to break more often and for its life span to decrease. Whereas if you follow an appropriate maintenance schedule, you've got many years of happy motoring."





SWAP... Ignoring your diet

WITH... Adopting easy healthy eating habits

Aussie men are 20 per cent more likely than women to be overweight or obese[†]. But having a good diet doesn't have to be restrictive or complicated, assures Dr Tellis. "It's about eating appropriate amounts of good-quality food and prioritising good food in your life," he says. "Learn some basic kitchen skills – some men are flat-out heating a pie. Take the car analogy again – if you put the right fuel in your engine, your car will run better."

A good place to start is by looking at the amount of fruit and vegetables you eat each day. A recent report by the CSIRO found that only 15 per cent of Australian men meet the Australian dietary guidelines of consuming two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables each day (compared with 24 per cent of women)[†].

SWAP... Knocking back too many beers on a Friday night

WITH... Following recommended guidelines for safe consumption

"A lot of men drink too often and consume too much alcohol in the one go," says Dr Tellis. "The current National Health and Medical Research Council recommendations for safe alcohol consumption are no more than four standard drinks per day for men, with two alcohol-free days a week." However, this doesn't mean it's okay to consume all 20 drinks in one sitting. "Binge-drinking is one of the worst things you can do," adds Dr Tellis. "Prudent alcohol consumption – and being aware of where the limits are – is super important."

SWAP... Missing your mate's warning signs

WITH... Knowing the signs of someone who might be struggling

Men are far more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour – so much so that the Australian Government's National Men's Health Strategy 2020-2030 names risk-taking and injury as one of the top five priority health issues for men.

Dr Tellis recommends both men and women look out for warning signs in their friends and loved ones. "Getting caught speeding, drinking a lot, getting into trouble with the law, having trouble at work or at home or in social situations, having trouble with their peer group – these are all big signs," he says. "But I think the catch-all thing is just a change in behaviour. When you think, 'You know what, they're not quite right, there's something going on here.'" If this happens, Dr Tellis says, suggest your friend visits their GP for a chat.

SWAP... Exercising on occasion

WITH... Finding time for regular activity you enjoy doing

Do you go all-out at the gym once a week and then spend the rest of your off-duty time on the couch?

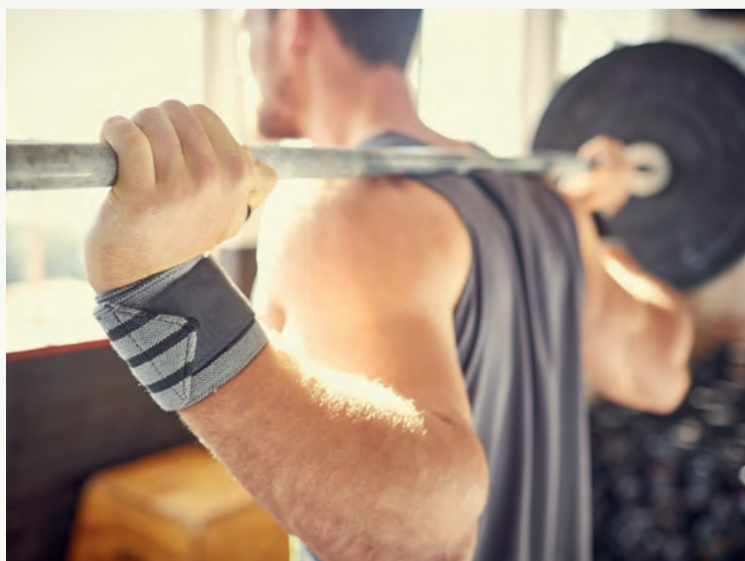
Dr Tellis says this is common among men, but advises that regular incidental activity should be the focus. "Aim to walk briskly for 45 minutes to an hour each day," he says. "Go just fast enough that you're slightly out of breath, so it's slightly difficult to have a conversation rather than feeling completely out of breath."

SWAP... Visiting different GPs when you're feeling unwell

WITH... Finding a GP you can connect with long-term

"Every Australian should have a regular specialist general practitioner that they see appropriately often and have a good working relationship with," says Dr Tellis. "Find someone who's got fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners or the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, get to know them, make sure they know you and then visit them routinely."

Dr Tellis believes that having one doctor you trust and feel comfortable with is one of the most important factors in helping to ensure good health. As for how often you should see them? "The average Australian visits the GP five to six times a year."



SWAP... Making a beeline for too-heavy weights at the gym

WITH... Perfecting your form to improve strength and reduce injury risk

“Weight-training is the favourite part of working out for many men, but I see so many guys who complain they have a sore back after a heavy weights session,” says physiotherapist Caitlin Reid of Aprivé Wellness. “The main reason is a blend of poor technique, an overly heavy load and incorrect activation of the core. Correct lifting technique can be tricky to get right but once you do, you’ll be amazed by how efficiently you can lift.”

If this sounds like you, Caitlin suggests refining your barbell-lift technique by practising with an empty bar in front of a mirror. Here’s how to get it right.

- 1. Turn on your core muscles,** particularly your TA, or transversus abdominis (deep abdominals), to support your lower back.
- 2. Open your chest** by gently arching your upper back.
- 3. Engage your gluteal muscles** as well as your hamstrings.
- 4. Go to a physio** if you’re not sure you’re doing it right. They’ll be able to help you get the technique right so you can then take it to the gym.



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