

A SPOTLIGHT ON MEN'S HEALTH

THE FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY

Over the last few years, The Fire Fighters Charity has helped restore a number of mountain rescue team members to better health, through their arrangement with the Rescue Benevolent Fund. During the Coronavirus lockdown, they kindly offered to share some of the articles published in their online Support Hub. For Men's Health Week, 15-21 June, the charity shone a light on three of the more common health conditions that affect men and explain what to look out for.

KNOW YOUR PROSTATE

The prostate gland is part of the male reproductive system and is located just below the bladder. It is roughly the size of a walnut and is responsible for helping to produce the fluid found in semen. The prostate gland surrounds the tube known as the urethra, which passes urine from the bladder to the outside of the body, so any prostate disease or growth (benign or malignant) is likely to cause problems with urination.

Around 47,000 men in the UK are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year and approximately 11,000 will die of the disease. However, as men age many will develop problems in relation to their prostate that aren't indicative of cancer.

Indeed, many of the symptoms of non-cancerous conditions can be like those of prostate cancer, so don't panic if any of the following rings true for you. Symptoms of prostate cancer may include the following :

- Slow or weak flow of urine or difficulty starting to urinate
- Urinating more frequently
- Pain or burning sensation when urinating or unexplained urinary infection
- Difficulty getting or maintaining an erection, impotence or pain during ejaculation
- Constipation and altered bowel habit
- Blood in urine or semen
- Pain in the back.

These can also be caused by non-cancerous conditions, but if you're concerned, speak to your GP. The good news is that prostate cancer is a very slow-growing cancer and if caught early can be cured.

However, prostate cancer can also develop without you noticing any symptoms and there is currently no national screening programme in the UK for the disease. Diagnosis usually begins with a simple blood test to measure your levels of Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA), a protein uniquely secreted by the prostate.

These tests aren't definitive, so doctors will usually take several of them over time and follow them up with MRI scans and biopsies.

Your risk of developing prostate cancer increases with your age, with most men diagnosed in their sixties. But it can also affect younger men too, although less frequently. Other conditions also increase the risk, including race or ethnicity (unfortunately, black men have a higher risk), family history and your diet (too much dairy, processed food or red meat can also increase your chances).

You may be offered a PSA test at your free NHS health checks — at age 40 and every five years thereafter — and deciding to do so is an entirely personal choice. Some men may wish to know their baseline PSA levels, others may not, but the option is there for you.

As a rule, as with any form of cancer, preventative steps such as a healthy, balanced, Mediterranean diet and regular exercise are also worth considering. Research has shown that some foods such as tomatoes, pomegranate and green tea may also promote a healthy prostate, so there's no harm in adding a few of these to your diet too.

For more information, visit Prostate Cancer UK or Orchid – Fighting Male Cancer

TESTICULAR CANCER

Testicular cancer occurs when normal, healthy cells, which are carefully regulated by the body, begin to reproduce uncontrollably within an area of the body such as the testicles. It affects over 2,200 men every year and is more prevalent in young men aged 15-45, although it can affect men at any age. This might not sound like a very high statistic but, bearing the age in mind, it is far too many young men being affected by something that is entirely preventable if found early enough.

The good news with testicular cancer is that, if found early, there is nearly a 100% chance of cure (98% of men will

still be alive ten years after treatment). That's why it's so important not to delay seeing your GP if you have any of the following symptoms. It's important to check both your testicles in turn, looking out for any change in size or texture. Feel carefully for lumps, hardening, swelling or discomfort, a heaviness, dull ache or dragging sensation in the lower part of the abdomen, scrotum or groin, pain, and breast tenderness or back pain.

Again, these symptoms do not necessarily mean a cancer diagnosis as they are often associated with other conditions. But just be checking regularly and report any noticeable changes to your GP. And there's definitely no need to be embarrassed, or let pride get in the way of seeking help. They've seen it all before.

November has produced a great guide for checking your testes or for more information visit the Odd Balls Foundation or Orchid – Fighting Male Cancer.

BREAST CANCER IN MEN

We think of breast cancer as being a disease that only affects women, but this simply isn't true. So if you're asking can men get breast cancer? The short answer is yes. Men can and do get breast cancer. And while cases of breast cancer are fewer in men than woman, it is important to raise awareness of male breast cancer, as around 390 men are diagnosed with the disease each year in the UK alone.

Breast cancer begins at a cellular level when an individual cell mutates to form an abnormality. These cells then begin to divide and multiply, in time creating a cluster of abnormal cellular formations known as a tumour. Often this is what is felt when someone goes to their GP saying they've found a lump. It is important to note that not all lumps mean cancer and symptoms can be the same in breast cysts etc.

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in the UK, but its causes are numerous and diverse. Research has found that inherited

genes can play a role in someone developing it. While for women, around 3% of breast cancer cases in females are caused by faulty genes, in men, gene risk accounts for between 10% and 20% of cases. Age naturally increases an individual's risk of developing breast cancer too. For men this is the single biggest factor with most cases being reported in males between the age of 60 and 70 years.

Obesity, smoking, lack of exercise, alcohol and stress all have a negative effect on holistic health, so it goes without saying that these lifestyle choices also increase both men and women's chances of developing breast cancer. Reducing these in our lifestyle will help us take care of our health.

The most common symptom for both men and women with breast cancer is a lump in the breast area. This is nearly always painless. Other similar symptoms can include:

- Oozing from the nipple (a discharge) that may be blood stained
- Swelling of the breast
- Nipple that is pulled into the breast (called nipple retraction)
- Lump or swelling in either of your armpits
- Rash on or around the nipple
- Sore (ulcer) in the skin of the breast

The best thing you can do is to get to know your body. Figure out what is normal for you and take the time to check yourself. If you notice signs of any of the above or have any concerns seek medical advice as soon as possible. As with all cancers, the earlier it is found the easier it is to treat.

Treatment depends upon numerous factors, so the consultant will perform scans, bloods and biopsies to gain a better overall view and to gauge the type, size and cellular makeup and to gauge if the cancer has spread to any surrounding tissues. ☺

For more information, check out breastcancernow.org, macmillan.org.uk and www.cancerresearchuk.org.

The in-house rehabilitation programme offered by **The Fire Fighters Charity** is currently unavailable due to the Covid-19 pandemic but will be accessible once again to mountain and cave rescue team members, via the Rescue Benevolent Fund, when guidance permits.



TO FIND OUT MORE, GO TO FIREFIGHTERSCHARITY.ORG.UK. TO ACCESS THEIR SUPPORT LINE, CALL 0800 389 8820

WE ARE WHAT WE EAT...



CHICKEN TIKKA SALAD

Serves 2

This dish is simplified by using shop-bought Tikka mix so it's easy to make when you get home from work – or a call-out.

500g boneless chicken
½ tsp salt
2 tbsp lemon juice
2 tbsp Greek yogurt

1 packet Schwartz Tikka Spice Mix (available from supermarkets)
1 tbsp oil for basting
50g runner beans

1. Cut chicken into 1 inch pieces (or you can leave as whole breasts*)
2. Thoroughly mix the chicken with the Schwartz Tikka Spice mix in a bowl
3. Leave overnight in fridge or for 20 minutes if you want to cook it now
4. Preheat the grill on high
5. Either thread chicken onto skewers or place on a greased tray
6. Baste with oil and place under a grill, 4-5 inches from heat, for 5 minutes
7. Meanwhile lightly steam the runner beans
8. Now turn the chicken pieces, baste and grill for a further 5 minutes
9. Garnish with chopped coriander and serve with the runner beans.

* If leaving as whole breast: oven bake for 25 minutes on 190C

BEEF & PEPPER STIR FRY

Serves 3



Beef is high in minerals such as phosphorous, magnesium, selenium and copper which are all required for a healthy heart and central nervous system.

500g stir fry beef strips
2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
2 tbsp dark soy sauce
2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce

Small bunch spring onion, sliced on the diagonal
200g roasted antipasto peppers in oil or vinegar, drained and sliced
Boiled rice, to serve

1. To marinate the beef, place in a medium, non-metallic bowl and cover with the vinegar, soy and Worcestershire sauce. Leave for 20 minutes.
2. When the marinated beef is ready, heat a small dry wok until it's very hot. Tip in the beef, marinade and spring onions and stir fry for 2 minutes.
3. Add the roasted peppers, then stir fry for a further 2 minutes.
4. Divide the stir fry between shallow bowls and serve with some boiled rice.