HOW TO BE A MEN’S HEALTH CHAMPION
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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MEN’S HEALTH FORUM

Founded in 1994, the MHF is the independent voice for the health and wellbeing of men and boys in England, Scotland and Wales. Our goal is the best possible physical and mental health and wellbeing for all men and boys.

www.menshealthforum.org.uk

How To Be A Men’s Health Champion
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# HOW TO...
## BE A MEN’S HEALTH CHAMPION

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**MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST** 35

## HOW TO... GUIDES

Men are often considered ‘hard to reach’ when it comes to health. The Men’s Health Forum’s ‘How To...’ Guides give you the blueprint to change that.
Congratulations on becoming a Men’s Health Champion.

You have a very important role in helping the other members of your group think a bit more about their health. Hopefully, they will also start to make changes that will improve their lives. You may well find that being a Men’s Health Champion helps you develop new skills and improve your own health and wellbeing too.

You should have already received initial training to help get you started. You will also get additional support to develop your role further and to help you deal with any issues.

This guide aims to provide you with some useful information, but it doesn’t aim to turn you into a health expert – that’s not what being a Men’s Health Champion is about. Rather, this guide can support your conversations with men in your group about health by:

> Describing the role of Men’s Health Champions
> Explaining what men’s health means
> Highlighting some health problems and how they can be prevented
> Providing tips on how to hold a ‘healthy conversation’
> Providing information on how to access additional help and support.

Please read through this guide and then keep it handy so that you can refer to it when you need to.

Thank you for your important contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of men.

Your work as a Men’s Health Champion will also make a difference to men beyond your own group. That’s because it’s part of the Men’s Activity Network. The
Network has been set up by Hampshire County Council as part of the Step by Step (SBS) Interreg 2Seas project (co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund). This is a new way to improve men’s health inspired by the Men’s Sheds movement. The SBS approach is informal, down-to-earth, definitely not preachy and has been designed specifically for men. It is being tested in the UK, France, Belgium and The Netherlands.

If you have any questions or concerns as a Men’s Health Champion, contact the Health Champion Co-ordinator at Hampshire County Council: mansactivitynetwork@hants.gov.uk. You are not on your own!

**FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR HEALTH CHAMPIONS**

The Health Champion idea is linked to an approach to health behaviour change called Making Every Contact Count (MECC). This is now increasingly used by the NHS and other health organisations in the UK. The MECC Healthy Conversation Skills Philosophy is based on four principles:

> I am not responsible for the choices people make
> Being given information alone does not make people change
> People come to us with solutions
> It’s not possible to persuade people to change their habits.
LOOK AFTER YOURSELF (AND OTHERS)

There is good evidence that five specific things can make a big difference to someone’s sense of wellbeing. They’re called the Five Ways To Wellbeing.

The Five Ways are valuable in their own right; it is also likely that if someone is feeling good about themselves, they will find it easier to make the changes in their life that will improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Health Champions can help themselves by trying the Five Ways and help others by talking about them.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are:

**CONNECT: feeling close to, and valued by, other people.**

Some ideas to help feel more connected:

- Talk to someone rather than texting or emailing
- Talk to someone new
- Ask someone something about themselves that you don’t know
- Offer someone a lift or suggest you travel together
- Contact someone you have not spoken to for over a year

**BE ACTIVE: taking part in regular physical activity**

- Take stairs, not the lift
- Get off the train or bus a stop earlier or park the car further away
- Do stretching exercises
- Do an activity (eg. cycling or swimming) that you have not tried for a while
TAKE NOTICE: being aware of what is taking place in the present

> Look up at the sky rather than down at the pavement
> Take a different route on a familiar journey
> Go somewhere new for lunch
> Spend time in parks, forests and at the seaside

LEARN: continuing to learn throughout life

> Sign up for a class
> Read a book
> Do some puzzles
> Research something you are curious about (eg. your family tree)
> Take up a language or a musical instrument
> Learn some practical skills (eg. how to fix your bike)

GIVE: participating in social and community life

> Volunteer for a charity or community group
> Visit an elderly relative or neighbour
> Do someone a favour

The Five Ways were developed by the New Economics Foundation and there is more information about them at: hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/publichealth/fivewaystowellbeing.
Men’s Health Champions bring their enthusiasm and energy, local knowledge and experience of life to encourage and support others to improve their health and well-being.

The main role of a Health Champion is to enable and encourage informal ‘healthy conversations’ with other members of their group and help them to find the resources or services they might need. A Health Champion can also help to make a group a healthier place, for example, by organising occasional health events based around the needs of their group’s members. There is good evidence that Health Champions can make a real difference.

As a Men’s Health Champion, your key activity is informal conversations about health with men in your group to raise their awareness of issues and to encourage lifestyle changes and, when appropriate, acting as a ‘signpost’ to additional resources and services that might be helpful. The role could also include:

> Organising occasional healthy group activities, such as a walk in the country or around an interesting part of town. Other activities could include bowling, jogging or joining in with a local fundraising sports event.

> Organising health events for your group, for example a talk from a local health service or health professional.

> Keeping a stock of up-to-date health information that you can display and/or hand out to men you’ve talked to. You could create a noticeboard to display the information.

> Helping make your group a healthy place to be, for example by providing members with healthier snack alternatives such as fruit.

> Being an advocate for men’s health in your local community and beyond.
You’ll need to keep a simple record of activities. This will help the Men’s Activity Network’s organisers to find out more about the difference Health Champions are making. An easy-to-complete monitoring form has been created for you to return each month. There are no targets, it’s about capturing all the positive work you are doing. Being a Health Champion should not be stressful.

Ensure your group’s management committee and officers understand what you are trying to do. You will be far more effective with their active support.

Other projects with Health Champions have found that they don’t just help other people. The Champions themselves can grow in confidence, self-belief and improve their own health and wellbeing. Being a Health Champion can also be a stepping-stone to other types of voluntary work and even paid employment.

**WHAT SKILLS DO CHAMPIONS NEED?**

No medical or specialist knowledge is required. Instead, Health Champions should have:

> Empathy
> Enthusiasm
> Non-judgemental attitude
> Non-discriminatory approach - open to all
> **Listening and communication skills**
> A basic understanding of men's health issues
> Understanding the local community
> Knowledge of where people can go for more help
> Ability to keep information confidential
> Willingness to develop knowledge and skills.
WHAT ABOUT HEALTH INFORMATION?

Every group that is part of the Men’s Activity Network has been supplied with some free copies of the Hampshire Man Manual. This has been specially produced by the Men’s Health Forum charity and covers a wide range of issues. A downloadable online version is available from www.mensactivity.net.

It may help your work as a Health Champion if you have a readily-available stock of health information leaflets and links to helpful resources online. You can display these for men to take away at any time or hand them to individual men to back up your conversations. Organisations that specialise in specific health problems such as heart health or prostate cancer often produce free leaflets which can be ordered or downloaded. More information on some of these can be found on page 34.

Some of the men in your group might also find smartphone apps helpful. There are now so many and the quality varies hugely so it can be difficult to recommend any with confidence.

However, the NHS Apps Library (nhs.uk/apps-library) lists those it considers suitable and many smartphones now come pre-loaded with apps that can monitor physical activity, including the number of steps walked each day.

PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF!

This proverb may be ancient, but it contains an important message for Health Champions. You’re much more likely to be taken seriously by other men in your group if you practise at least some of what you preach.
WHAT IS MEN’S HEALTH?

Most or perhaps all of the people in your group will be men. You’ve probably heard the clichés about men not caring about health, dying young and not going to the doctor until they’re half-dead (or worse).

Not all these stereotypes are true – or at least not completely true. When you’re talking to men about their health, it’s important to know some accurate background information.

Most men do actually care about their health, are not hell-bent on self-destruction and are living longer than ever before. Men do visit GPs and use other health services in very large numbers. The proportion of men who smoke has fallen year-by-year. About one man in five doesn’t drink alcohol at all and young men are now drinking less alcohol.

A baby boy born today in Hampshire can expect, on average, to live for just over 81 years (up from about 73 in the mid-1980s). However, only 67.2 of those years will be in good health. That’s nearly 14 years in poorer health.

Men still have shorter lives than women, by about three years in Hampshire. They are more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, have a poor diet, be overweight and to die as a result of suicide. Men who live in areas of deprivation are especially likely to suffer from poor health and to have a shorter lifespan.

Men of working age particularly are less likely to see their GP. For example, many men who work full-time find it very hard to use services that are open only during standard office hours or feel that services are designed mainly around the needs of women and children.

There are many factors in health outcomes: work, environment, money and resources, housing, education, skills, diet, transport and family, friends and communities. But one of the reasons why men’s health
is in many respects worse than women’s is the way they have been brought up to behave as men. Men are still expected to be tough, strong, independent and not to ask for help. Some men view their bodies almost as if they are indestructible machines. Research shows that the more a man identifies with the ‘real man’ stereotype, the worse his health is likely to be.

MEN’S HEALTH IS ABOUT...

> Much more than prostates, penises and the other bits and pieces that only men have (although they’re obviously very important).

> Improving every aspect of the health and wellbeing of men and boys, such as heart health, mental health and sexual health.

> Preventing future health problems through healthier lifestyles.

> Making sure that any problems are detected and treated quickly by health services.
When talking to men about health, there are few DOs and DON'Ts and a couple of useful ways to remember them...

**DO...**

- **Listen** carefully and respectfully. Ask for clarification if something is not clear or for more detail if that would help. Occasionally summarise what has been said.

- **Choose the right moment** to start a conversation about health (perhaps when you're taking part in a shared activity such as woodwork or making tea). A good first question could simply be ‘How are things?’

- Look out for ‘door-opening’ conversation opportunities. Mentioning a national health day or week or a health issue that’s in the news could be a good way to start a chat. Or you could raise something previously discussed, such as ‘how’s that cough?’

- Think about your body language – adopt expressions and postures that are open, friendly and welcoming (so no folded arms, scowls or finger-wagging!).

- Offer short words of encouragement (eg. ‘Yes’, ‘I see’, ‘Go on’) when someone is talking.

- **Reflect back** a word or phrase to encourage someone to carry on. Show that you have understood what has been said by reacting, eg. ‘That must have been tough’.

- **Be comfortable with silence.** It’s fine. You don’t need to fill silences. Silence encourages the man to think and to speak.

- **Be discreet** and always keep other people’s health issues confidential.

- **Share your own experiences** to help build trust (without taking over or dominating the conversation).

- Use **humour** without being flippant.

- Use **everyday language** rather than medical terms (even if you know, or think you know, them).
ASK OPEN ‘DISCOVERY’ QUESTIONS

Open questions cannot be answered in a few words. They encourage the man to speak and offer you both an opportunity to understand his situation better.

> **What?** (happens when you do that)
> **Where?** may help but is often a closed question

> **How?** (does that make you feel)
> **Why?** may help but can sound confrontational so be careful.

> **When?** (does that usually happen)

> Have **information** to hand about where men can go for more help or say you’ll find out and let them know.

> Recognise that **some people may not want to make changes** or be in a good position to do so (eg. if someone’s grieving the loss of a loved one, they may not be able to contemplate stopping smoking or cutting back on their drinking).

> Encourage men to talk to a **health professional**.

DON’T…

> **Assume men aren’t interested** in their health (most men are, but may be embarrassed to talk about it).

> **Tell someone what to do** – it’s better to make suggestions and provide encouragement than to give orders (this isn’t the Army).

> **Try to persuade** someone to change their habits.

> **Blame men** for their health problems or risky lifestyles – making someone feel worse about themselves is not the best way to help them to change.

> **Argue** – don’t directly oppose what someone says and don’t get personal; instead, acknowledge what’s being said and remain encouraging and optimistic.

> **Be evangelical** (over-enthusiasm and constantly raising the issue can be a turn-off).

> **Dismiss concerns** as trivial (even if they seem unimportant, he probably wouldn’t be talking to you if they didn’t matter to him).
> **Act shocked** if some men use terms to describe body parts that you might find crude or even objectionable. It’s more important that they talk about their health than use language you find acceptable.

> **Attempt to diagnose** a health problem or advise people about their medicines. (You’re probably not a qualified health professional and it’s not part of your role as a Health Champion, anyway.)

> **Suggest medically unproven alternative treatments** (eg. homeopathy or herbalism) even if you’re convinced they’ve worked for you.

> **Say you’ll do something (such as find out about a particular service) and then not do it.** And don’t pretend that you know something that you don’t.

> **Be Mr Fixit.** It’s not a Health Champion’s role to have all the answers – people are responsible for their own choices and finding their own solutions.

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**THE ‘RULES’**

> **R** - Resist the urge to tell someone what to do

> **U** - Understand it’s the man’s reasons for change that matter (not yours)

> **L** - Listening is key

> **E** - Empower and encourage the man to understand that he has the power to change his behaviour

> **S** - Silence is golden. Don’t be afraid of it. Resist the desire to fill it.
HOW TO HAVE A ‘HEALTHY’ CONVERSATION

A health champion conversation shouldn’t be more complicated than any other conversation. But it can help to have a structure in mind if you want to be as effective as possible. A simple one to use is ‘the three As’:

> **Ask** – ask the right questions to help the man you’re talking to explore the issues

> **Assess** – support him in identifying his first steps, and a plan that works for him, including what information and support he might need

> **Assist** – support him to take the first steps and to feel in control of the process, perhaps help him set a goal.

Don’t fly in and fix it. It cannot be overstated that your job is not to solve other people’s problems. Your role is to help someone else decide what they might (or might not) want to do.

So you may well find you spend far more time on Asking and Assessing than you do on Assisting. You may find yourself going back and forth - asking and assessing, asking and assessing. This is not a bad sign. Quite the opposite, it means you’re helping. You may never get to Assist if that’s the man’s choice.

ICE-BREAKERS

Obviously, just launching into a health conversation is not going to work. You need an ice-breaker to start a chat and establish a rapport before launching into any health stuff:

> How are things? How you doing?

> How’s your week/week-end been?

> Something more personal (eg. did you visit your family? Or, how’s your cold?)
Something in the news or TV (eg. ‘did you see that programme on alcohol?’ Or, ‘it’s mental health awareness week in October.’)

Something honest about yourself (eg. I had a bit of a tough week-end... )

**WHAT TO TALK ABOUT...**

Health Champions can support men in many ways. The following are all good conversation topics.

> Increasing **awareness** (eg. by finding out about the risks of excessive drinking, such as cancer or liver disease)

> Exploring their **feelings** about the issue (eg. how they feel about health warnings regarding smoking or obesity)
> Thinking about the **impact on others** of their behaviour (eg. the effect of drinking or gambling excessively on other family members)

> Considering how a **change of scene** might help (eg. meeting friends in a café rather than the pub might help them drink less)

> **Reflecting** on how their behaviour makes them feel about themselves (eg. self-disgust after too much beer and fast food)

> Developing **new habits** (eg. not keeping alcohol at home or getting off the bus a stop early)

> Finding **support** (eg. a friend or a group that can help with weight loss)

> Making **substitutions** (eg. going to the gym or to choir practice rather than the pub on Friday evenings)

> **Rewarding** themselves (eg. saving the money spent on cigarettes and putting it towards a holiday)

> Making a ‘public’ **commitment** (eg. telling family, friends or colleagues about a decision to get fitter).

**CLOSING A CHAT...**

> Summarise discussion and any next steps

> Perhaps arrange to meet again. (Would a different location help?)

> Perhaps signpost to other services

> Agree to keep in touch.

If you need to get away and can’t, try to be as honest as you can. You’re not a professional and if someone needs that sort of help, it is best to signpost them. Be clear about the boundaries of the Health Champion’s role.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

To be an effective Health Champion, people have to trust you. You must not share any personal information without consent or record or store any confidential information that can be linked to a particular person.
One commonly-used model suggests that people generally go through several stages when changing their behaviour. Health Champions can help at each one.

**PRECONTEMPLATION:**
At this stage, there is no interest in making a change

Health Champions could:

- Raise the topic but don’t push it or preach.
CONTEMPLATION:
Thought is given to the pros and cons of change

Health Champions could:

> Explore the man’s thoughts on the pros and cons of making a change and discuss how to deal with the negatives.

PREPARATION:
Getting ready to change and finding out more

Health Champions could:

> Provide info and details of services that could help;
> encourage some small initial steps;
> emphasise the positive reasons for change.

ACTION:
Making the change

Health Champions could:

> Offer praise and encouragement;
> highlight the rewards and benefits of change.

MAINTENANCE:
Keeping the change going and avoiding temptation

Health Champions could:

> Highlight the successes and achievements so far;
> discuss thoughts/experiences on handling temptation;
> explore the rewards of making the change.
RELAPSE:
Going back to previous behaviour (although hopefully this won’t happen)

Health Champions could:

> Stress what has been achieved and that it is possible to try again;
> explore the reasons for relapse;
> consider what specialist help might be needed and provide signposting.

WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE?

You are not a professional and as a health champion have no more (or less) responsibility for anyone else than you do in everyday life.

However, people may disclose information that makes you concerned for their wellbeing. If they’re not in immediate danger, signpost them to an appropriate service.

If you think someone is in immediate danger, needs urgent medical attention or is having a mental health crisis, encourage them to call 999 or go to A&E.

If they want urgent support but don’t want to go to A&E/call 999, they could:

> Contact NHS 111
> Contact their GP surgery and ask for an emergency appointment
> If related to the person’s mental health, call Samaritans on 116 213 or
> Contact the local Mental Health crisis team (CRHT), if they’re under their care.

Further information is available at the following links:

> Safeguarding of adults: www.hampshiresab.org.uk
> Children and young people: www.hampshiresscp.org.uk

There is an Alerters Guide for members of the public:

An “adult at risk” is someone aged 18 years or older who:

> Has care and support needs
> Is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect

and, as a result of those needs, is unable to protect themselves.

If you’re concerned that an adult at risk is at risk of abuse or neglect, contact Hampshire Adults Health and Care on 0300 555 1386 (with their consent)

In an emergency or in the event of an immediate danger, call the police on 999.

If you wish to discuss your concerns with a member of HCC Adults Health and Care you can ring the safeguarding advice line 01962 847214 (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm).

If you believe a child is at risk of neglect or abuse, contact Hampshire Children’s Services on 0300 555 1384 (out-of-hours: 0300 555 1373). You do not need to know everything about the child before you call.

In an emergency or in the event of an immediate danger, call the police on 999.
A vital part of the Health Champion’s role is to know when to point people towards specialist help and where to suggest they go.

It’s important to note that Health Champions do not refer people to services in the way that GPs refer people to hospital consultants. Your role is not to send emails or make phone calls to services on behalf of people. Mostly, all you need to do is provide information about where they could go. Sometimes, however, in some situations, you may want to give a bit of extra help to keep them motivated or to nudge them in the right direction.

Generally speaking, if someone is concerned about a symptom that needs diagnosis and treatment or if they have a concern about their current treatment, you should encourage them to speak to a health professional as soon as possible.

If they want advice about making a lifestyle change, such as stopping smoking or losing weight, it probably won’t be so urgent but it is still important to provide information as soon as you can in case their motivation falters as time passes.

Once you have given someone a contact, next time you see them you can ask if they’ve taken any action. If they have, be sure to say ‘well done’ and ask how it went. If they haven’t done anything, you can discuss what got in the way and offer further encouragement.

More information about the main primary health services is on page 32 and organisations which can provide expert advice and information are listed on page 34.

**BUT IT’S NOT JUST A HEALTH PROBLEM**

Many health problems are caused by issues that health services cannot directly help with. Unemployment, low wages and other work problems, poor quality or
unaffordable housing, discrimination, emotional or physical domestic abuse, problems with children or other family members – other kinds of support are needed for these types of issues.

Citizens Advice can help with benefits, work, debt and money, housing, family issues, immigration and other issues. There are several branches in Hampshire – see citizensadvice.org.uk.

Other sources of support can be found at connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk.

NATIONAL HEALTH WEEKS AND DAYS

These provide opportunities for conversations and events:

- **National Heart Month** – February. Contact: bhf.org.uk
- **National No Smoking Day** – this is on the second Wednesday in March. Contact: nhs.uk/smokefree
- **Prostate Cancer Awareness Month** – March. Contact: prostatecanceruk.org
- **Bowel Cancer Awareness Month** – April. Contact: bowelcanceruk.org.uk
- **Stress Awareness Month** – April. Contact: stress.org.uk
- **Men’s Health Week** – takes place every June in the week that ends with Fathers’ Day. Contact: menshealthforum.org.uk
- **World Mental Health Day** – on 10 October each year. Contact: mentalhealth.org.uk
- **Movember** – November. Raises funds for men’s health projects, in particular prostate cancer and mental health. Contact: uk.movember.com
Health Champions are asked to keep a simple record of their activities so that their impact on the health and wellbeing of men in their group can be evaluated. This won’t be used to identify any individuals or be used as a form of ‘performance’ rating. It is purely to help make sure the programme is having a positive impact on men.

**CONVERSATIONS NOT INDIVIDUALS**

The data you collect can also help you to identify the issues that your members are most concerned about. This could influence what leaflets you order or which topics you invite speakers to talk about.

The data needed includes:

- The number of conversations with men about health
- The general theme of the conversation (eg. smoking, stress, etc)
- Any action taken (eg. health information provided, specialist service suggested)

The Health Champion Co-ordinator will provide Champions with a template they can use to collect the required information.

- Each time you have a conversation with a man in your group, complete one row of the spreadsheet. If you discuss more than one topic, tick more than one box in that row.
- If you have a second conversation with the same man later on the same day, or on another day, start a new row on the spreadsheet.
- You don’t need to complete the form during or immediately after each conversation. Just do it as soon as you have an opportunity and rely on your memory.
You don’t need to record men’s names or anything that could identify them.

Return the completed forms on a monthly basis. You can:

- scan and email them to: mensactivitynetwork@hants.gov.uk
- or post them to: SBS Health Champion Co-ordinator, Public Health, Hampshire County Council, Elizabeth II Court, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UQ.

Remember not to include any personal information on the sheet.

Health Champions (along with all group members) will also be invited to take part in a wider evaluation being run by the University of Chichester as part of the SBS project to see whether the programme overall (and internationally) is improving men’s health.

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**Health Conversation Recording Sheet**

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Please return completed form on a monthly basis to the Health Champion Co-ordinator or email mensactivitynetwork@hants.gov.uk
WEIGHT AND HEALTHY EATING

Weight is often seen as mainly an issue for women but men are much more likely to be overweight. **Around two thirds of men are now overweight.** Our inactive lifestyles plus our high-calorie diets mean our bodies are taking in more calories than they are burning and the excess is stored as fat.

Being overweight increases the risk of a wide range of health problems, including diabetes (type 2), cardiovascular disease (CVD), many types of cancer (including bowel cancer), depression and anxiety and incontinence.

The easiest way to check if someone is overweight is to measure their waist. This is best done by wrapping a tape measure around the waist at a point midway between the bottom of the ribs and the top of the hips (usually around the belly button). The measurement should be taken after breathing out naturally.

Whatever a man’s height, he is at increased risk of the conditions mentioned and should try to lose weight if his **waist is 94cm** (37ins) or more.

Men with a waist circumference of **102cm** (40ins) or more are considered to be at high risk and should contact their GP.

Weight is closely linked to healthy eating. **Only one man in four eats enough fruit and vegetables every day** and, on average, men eat too much red and processed meat. For example, to reduce the risk of bowel cancer no more than 70g of red and processed meat should be eaten each day.

A healthy diet reduces the risk of developing CVD and many types of cancer. It will help to prevent constipation and haemorrhoids (piles) and weight gain. It could also help to boost energy levels and concentration and help fuel more physical activity.

Things you can do to eat more healthily include: eating high-fibre foods (wholegrain cereals and bread, wholewheat pasta, broccoli); drinking more water and fewer sugary drinks; cutting down on alcohol and planning meals in advance.

It is hard to lose weight and many people benefit from being part of a group. Some are specifically for men and tend to put more emphasis on fitness.

If you’ve made changes to your diet and levels of physical activity but you’re not losing a significant amount of weight, your GP may recommend medicines or further treatment that could help.
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

One in five men don’t do enough physical activity to benefit their health. Activity levels fall with age and, by 75, about half of men are not active enough.

The NHS suggest a weekly minimum of 150 minutes of moderate activity - this is the sort of activity that causes slight breathlessness such as brisk walking - or 75 minutes of more vigorous activity.

Adults should also do muscle-strengthening activities on at least two days a week.

Strength and balance exercises are particularly important for people aged 65 and over. Steady and Strong classes in Hampshire can enable individuals to live independently for longer.

People who do regular physical activity have a lower risk of CVD, diabetes (type 2), bowel cancer, depression, dementia and premature death.

There’s no magic bullet that can increase activity levels but what works best for many people - and is easiest to maintain over a long period - is building exercise into everyday life. There are plenty of ideas for how to do this in Hampshire Man.

SMOKING

Smoking is perhaps the biggest avoidable health risk and the number of smokers has fallen over the past 40 years. About one man in six now smokes. Most smokers want to quit.

Just one cigarette a day is enough to harm your health. (You might assume that 1 a day is 20 times less dangerous than 20 a day. It is not. It is only half as dangerous.)

There are many immediate benefits to quitting smoking. You feel better and reduce your risk of disease. There’s more on the risks of smoking and ways to quit in Hampshire Man.

ALCOHOL

Nearly one in three men drinks more alcohol than the weekly recommended maximum of 14 units (a 75cl bottle of wine contains about 10 units of alcohol, a pint of higher-strength beer or lager about three units).

Whilst there is no safe level of drinking, regularly drinking over 14 units will increase your risk of serious health conditions including heart and liver disease and cancer.

There are thousands of alcohol-related deaths every year, two-thirds of them male.

Not smoking, eating well, maintaining a healthy weight, drinking sensibly and keeping active will reduce a man’s risk of most of the conditions on the next few pages.

There is more on all these topics in Hampshire Man. It includes the signs and symptoms of many conditions and tips for beating them. Check it out and share it with the men you’re working with.
One man in six has cardiovascular disease (CVD). It is a general term for conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels. It causes a quarter of all male deaths.

There are several different types of CVD, including coronary heart disease (when the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle is blocked or reduced leading to angina, heart attacks or heart failure) and stroke (where the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off).

CVD death rates in men have been falling because of the decline in smoking and improvements in treatments and preventive drugs including statins (to lower blood cholesterol levels), tablets to reduce high blood pressure and low-dose aspirin to prevent blood clots.

Common CVD symptoms include:

> **Angina** – chest pain ranging from mild to severe. Symptoms usually pass with rest or treatment.

> **Heart attack** – more severe chest pain than angina, even when resting, that can also spread to the arms, jaw, neck, back and abdomen. The individual may also experience light-headedness, sweating, nausea and breathlessness.

> **Heart failure** – increasing difficulty in breathing.

> **Stroke** - the face may drop on one side, being unable to lift both arms and keep them there because of weakness or numbness in one arm and slurred or garbled speech.

Erection problems (ED) can be an early warning sign of cardiovascular disease. This is because the small blood vessels in the penis get blocked by fatty deposits before the larger blood vessels elsewhere.

People with diabetes are at greater risk of CVD so treating the diabetes can help.

**CANCER**

Cancer is becoming more common, mainly because we are living longer. One in every two men born after 1960 will develop a cancer. The good news is that more people are surviving, especially if it’s caught early. Almost half of men with cancer survive for 10 years or more.

Prostate cancer is the most common, affecting one in six men. Lung and bowel are next on the list. There is now a wide range of treatments for cancer. The main ones are surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy (anti-cancer drugs).

Common cancer symptoms include:

> Coughing, chest pain and breathlessness

> Changes in bowel habits, including blood in poo

> Bleeding in urine, vomit, or from the bottom
A mole that has an irregular or asymmetrical shape or is more than one colour.

Unexplained weight loss

Painless swelling or lump in one of the testicles.

These symptoms may have other causes but a doctor needs to check.

**About four in 10 cancers could be prevented by a healthy lifestyle** - ie. following the guidance on p26.

**DIABETES**

**One man in 10 has diabetes.** Type 1 diabetes (10% of all cases) can't be prevented and is usually detected in childhood. Type 2 diabetes, which is becoming more common, usually develops in adults. It is often caused by preventable problems such as obesity or a sedentary lifestyle.

Both types of diabetes cause people to have too much sugar in their blood as a result of a problem with insulin, a hormone that allows sugar in the blood to enter and fuel the body's cells. People with Type 1 diabetes make no insulin at all. With Type 2, there's not enough insulin produced by the body or it doesn't work effectively.

In both types of diabetes, because glucose can't get into the cells, it builds up in the blood. If not managed, this can lead to heart attacks, strokes, kidney disease, eye and foot problems and, in men, erection difficulties (the nerves and blood vessels in the penis get damaged by high sugar levels).

The Diabetes Prevention Programme offers tailored, personalised help including education on healthy eating and lifestyle choices and support for reducing weight through physical exercise and portion control.

Type 1 diabetes is treated by insulin which is taken either by injection or a pump. Type 2 diabetes can be treated by insulin or tablets as well as a healthy diet and physical activity.

**ERECITION PROBLEMS**

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is a condition that often starts to affect men in their 40s but becomes much more common with age. **Almost half of men in their 60s are unable to achieve a suitable erection for sex.**

ED is not an inevitable consequence of ageing. It is a symptom of an underlying problem such as diabetes, blocked blood vessels, drinking too much alcohol, drug side-effects, spinal cord injury, prostate surgery, depression, stress or anxiety and relationship problems.

This means any man with ED should see a doctor so both the ED and the underlying cause can be addressed.

There are many effective treatments including tablets which can be prescribed by a doctor or bought over-the-counter from pharmacies. But do not take ED drugs bought from unregulated websites – they might look like the real thing but they can be toxic. Plus, a doctor needs to check what's causing the ED in the first place.
STRESS & MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health problems like depression, anxiety and stress are very common in men. It’s estimated that about a third of men have had a mental health problem that has been diagnosed by a doctor – or could have been if the man had asked for help.

Men are particularly reluctant to see a doctor about mental health issues and are also much more likely to end their own lives than women. Stigma is a big barrier for many men but this may be changing as more men talk publicly about their mental health.

The warning signs and tips on how to beat them are in Hampshire Man. Treatments for common mental health problems can also include counselling or therapy and/or anti-depressant or anti-anxiety drugs.

LONELINESS

About eight million UK men feel lonely at least once a week; three million say it happens daily. It’s serious. The health impact of loneliness has been compared to smoking 15 cigarettes per day.

Among those most likely to be lonely are people with long-term health conditions, in particular men widowed or unmarried and living alone. Having said that, even people who seem to be well-connected can feel lonely.

A mental health problem increases the risk of feeling lonely which impacts on mental health. A vicious circle. Lonely people are much more likely to die prematurely.

Most people want some kind of social contact but everyone has different social needs. Some people may want a few close friends; others prefer a large group of varied acquaintances.

Some people may not have enough basic social contact; others may be surrounded but not feel understood, listened to or cared for.

These steps could help prevent or tackle loneliness:

> Talk - to family members or friends, join a club, class or do voluntary work. Some cafes have designated ‘talking tables’ where customers can strike up chats.

> Get online.

> But avoid comparing your life to others.

> Be as open and honest as you can. Don’t keep yourself to yourself.

> Appreciate time spent alone - do things that bring pleasure.

> See a counsellor for support.

A major barrier for engaging in a new activity is fear of not having anyone to talk to. Perhaps have a person in your group who welcomes newcomers.

RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

Relationship problems are common. Over 40% of marriages end in divorce and many couples argue regularly or consider separating.
It is hard to generalise about causes but for men they can include:

- Conflict over work/life balance (men are more likely to work long hours, women more likely to have domestic responsibilities).
- Financial problems – men can feel under pressure as ‘breadwinners’.
- Unemployment or insecure work – work is a major part of male identity.
- The misuse of alcohol or drugs.
- The birth of a baby – men can feel pushed out and/or incompetent.
- Retirement – men may feel at a loose end without work networks.
- Poor health which can affect men or partners (and put some men into the difficult role of a carer).

It is hard to generalise about solutions too. But it is clear that talking about the problem is crucial, whether that’s with a partner, other trusted people or a relationship counsellor.

**DEMENTIA**

Dementia is an umbrella term for problems with brain function affecting memory in particular. Alzheimer’s is the best-known and most common type but there are several others, including vascular dementia.

One in 14 people over 65 will develop dementia and one in six over 80. It is slightly less common in men. Risk increases with age but dementia is not an inevitable consequence of ageing.

The symptoms of dementia include:

- Short-term memory problems
- Difficulties concentrating
- Problems planning and thinking things through
- Struggling with familiar daily tasks, like using a bank card
- Issues with language and communication, such as remembering the right word or keeping up with a conversation
- Problems judging distances (even though eyesight is fine)
- Mood changes and difficulties controlling emotions (being unusually sad, frightened, angry, upset, or losing self-confidence or becoming withdrawn)

Early diagnosis is key because, while there is no cure for dementia, drugs may be able to slow down the progression of the disease. A healthy lifestyle can also help as can specialist support, such as help with learning to perform everyday tasks.

It is now believed around a third of Alzheimer’s cases could be prevented. All the usual lifestyle advice plus exercising the mind (crosswords, puzzles, books, languages etc) will help as will simply talking and communicating with others regularly.

It is important that people with dementia live active lives. Some men with dementia may wish to join your group so find out how to be ‘dementia-friendly’.
For colds, coughs, stomach upsets and similar issues, the local pharmacy is a good first point of call. Pharmacists are highly-trained health professionals and very skilled at dealing with common ‘minor ailments’. Pharmacies are open for longer than GP surgeries and appointments are not necessary. Most now have private consultation rooms so people no longer have to discuss embarrassing problems at the counter. Pharmacists will also advise people if they need to see a GP.

The GP is the best place to go for more serious non-urgent problems, where a prescription might be needed or when diagnostic tests are required. Many GPs now talk to patients on the phone as this means that many cases can dealt with more quickly.

Urgent Treatment Centres (also called walk-in centres, urgent care centres or minor injury units) provide immediate medical attention in cases that are not life-threatening. Urgent Treatment Centres are open for at least 12 hours a day every day of the week (including bank holidays).

Conditions that can be treated at an Urgent Treatment Centre include:

- Sprains and strains
- Suspected broken limbs
- Minor head injuries
- Cuts and grazes
- Bites and stings

Accident and emergency (A&E) services deal with genuine life-threatening emergencies, such as:

- Loss of consciousness
- Acute confused state and fits that are not stopping
- Chest pain
- Breathing difficulties
- Severe bleeding that cannot be stopped
- Severe allergic reactions
- Severe burns or scalds
- Stroke
- Major trauma such as a road traffic accident.

An ambulance should be called by dialing **999** if someone needs immediate medical help; for example, if they seem to have had a heart attack or stroke, have a spinal injury or if they’re bleeding severely.

For urgent medical problems where it’s not clear what to do or which service to use, **NHS 111** can be contacted for advice. Either dial 111 or visit 111.nhs.uk.

For lifestyle issues, men who want to stop smoking, lose weight, drink less alcohol or get fitter can access advice and support from a wide range of services.
services, online and offline. More information about these services is on page 34.

CHECKS & SCREENING

Health screening is not just for women. Men are entitled to several screening tests too. It varies with age.

Age 40 - NHS Health Check
The NHS offers men (and women) aged 40-74 a free NHS Health Check every five years. It’s designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, diabetes or dementia. People are invited by letter but if one doesn’t arrive, men should contact their GP directly and ask for a Health Check.

Age 60 - Bowel screening
Bowel cancer can be detected and treated at an early stage by screening. Men (and women) aged 60-74 are automatically sent an NHS testing kit every two years and people over 75 can request one.

Age 60 - free eye tests
Anyone aged 60 and over can have a free NHS eye (sight) test from an optometrist as often as they need one – for most people, this is every two years. This is important because there are several potentially serious conditions that are more common in older people, such as cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration. All are much easier to treat if detected sooner rather than later. Older people are also more likely to need glasses for reading.

Age 65 - AAA screening
Men (and only men) aged 65 are offered NHS screening for AAA (abdominal aortic aneurysms). A quick, painless ultrasound scan of the tummy checks for a bulge or swelling in the aorta, the main blood vessel from the heart. This can be serious if it’s not spotted early: it could get bigger and eventually burst. Most men need only one test. Men over 65 who have not been screened before can also ask for a test.

VACCINATIONS

For older men (and women), several vaccinations are recommended:

- Pneumococcal vaccine (the pneumonia vaccine). This is given once to 65 year olds.
- Flu vaccine. This is offered each year to people aged 65 and over.
- Shingles vaccination. This is given once to people who turn 70 or, if they missed out then, at 78.

These can be had at GP surgeries.

NHS WEBSITE

The NHS website (nhs.uk) is a good source of information on a very wide range of health issues. It also provides a free search tool for all kinds of local health services, including GPs, pharmacies, dentists, drug and alcohol services, smoking cessation and so on. Go to nhs.uk/service-search and type in the service you want and your postcode or town.
Hampshire County Council is a good place to start for information, advice and details of local services at connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk.

The Men’s Health Forum charity’s website (menshealthforum.org.uk) also contains health information specifically targeted at men.

Cancer
Macmillan Cancer Support (macmillan.org.uk). Helpline: 0808 808 00 00.
Prostate Cancer UK (prostatecanceruk.org). Helpline: 0800 074 8383.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD)
The British Heart Foundation (bhf.org.uk). Helpline: 0300 330 3311.

Dementia

Diabetes

Drugs and Alcohol
NHS information and advice on alcohol (nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/)
Alcohol Change UK (alcoholchange.org.uk).
Drinkcoach (drinkcoach.org.uk/home) Drinkline helpline: 0300 123 1110.
NHS information on drugs and drug use (nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/drug-addiction-getting-help)
Frank (advice on drug use) (talktofrank.com), Helpline: 0300 1236600.
Inclusion Recovery Hampshire (drug and alcohol treatment and recovery for over 25s, including for addiction to prescription drugs) (inclusion.org/inclusion-recovery-hampshire).

Erection problems
Sexual Advice Association (sexualadviceassociation.co.uk).

Fitness
NHS 12-week Fitness Plan (nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/12-week-fitness-plan).

Healthy eating
NHS Eat Well (nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well)

Smoking
Smokefree (nhs.uk/smokefree)
Smokefree Hampshire (smokefreehampshire.co.uk). Call 01264 563039 or 0800 772 3649. Text QUIT to 66777.

Weight
Man v Fat (manvfat.com)
NHS Weight Loss Plan (nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-NHS-weight-loss-plan)
Healthy weight: support for over 18s who want to lose weight. (hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/publichealth/healthyweight)
POWER (Positive Online Weight Reduction) (powerhants.lifeguidehealth.org/player/play/powerhants)
Mental health
Samaritans - see page 21
The Campaign to End Loneliness (campaigntoendloneliness.org)
CALM – Campaign Against Living Miserably (thecalmzone.net). Helpline: 0800 58 58 58
MIND also runs several wellbeing centres across Hampshire. Friendly, informal and welcoming, they offer short-term support to people with mental health problems including stress, depression, anxiety, addictions, self-esteem and anger management. The centres are:
• Aldershot (01252 317481)
• Andover (01264 332297)
• Basingstoke (01256 476572)
• Eastleigh (023 8061 1458)
• Fareham and Gosport (01329 281 445)
• Havant and East Hants (02392 498916)
• New Forest (023 8084 1341 or 01425 620642)
• Romsey (07827 317468)
• Winchester (01962 859012)

Sexual Health and Relationships
Free and confidential services to improve the sexual health of adults and young people in Hampshire (www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/getiton)
Relate (relate.org.uk)
Hampshire Domestic Abuse Service (for victims and perpetrators) (www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/domesticabuse)

MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST

WARNING SIGNS:
> Eating more or less than normal
> Mood swings and anger
> Low self-esteem
> Feeling tense or anxious
> Not sleeping properly (or wanting to sleep all the time)
> Poor memory or forgetfulness
> Excess drinking/drug use/gambling
> Feeling very tired and lacking energy
> Withdrawing from family and friends
> Behaving out of character
> No concentration/struggling at work
> Losing interest in things you usually enjoy, including sex
> Physical signs like headaches, irritable bowel syndrome or aches and pains.

ACTIONS THAT CAN HELP:
> Connect with other people
> Be physically active
> Take notice of what’s going on around you in the here-and-now
> Learn about new things
> Give (an act of kindness) or volunteer
> Eat healthily
> Sleep better – no screens/stimulants before bed, relaxation exercises etc
> Have fun - singing, dancing and laughing are all proven to boost mood
> Get out in the fresh air, especially somewhere green (park, common, countryside) or by the seaside
> Learn some relaxation, mindfulness or meditation techniques
> Do something creative.
A tried and tested way to improve health in a community, Health Champions are not health professionals but members of the public who care about public health and want to help improve it. Almost anyone can train to be a Health Champion. This ‘How To...’ Guide explains what’s involved.

Health Champions are empathetic, good listeners, able to be supportive without being directive. For men, they can be particularly useful: their more informal, man-to-man approach can provide an invaluable stepping stone between the men in their community and traditional, more formal health services.

This Guide was written for Hampshire County Council’s Men’s Activity Network as part of the Step by Step (SBS) Interreg 2Seas project (co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund). It explores the role of a Health Champion, how to communicate with men, behaviour-change and how to signpost men. It also introduces basic men’s health issues.

Men are often considered ‘hard to reach’ when it comes to health. The Men’s Health Forum’s ‘How To...’ Guides give you the blueprint to change that.


www.menshealthforum.org.uk