

Men's Health

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN MEN'S HEALTH HEALTH AND AGEING

Health policy and health services need to acknowledge the specific health needs of men and boys.

Male health needs are not only related to physical biology, but also to attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that influence men's health. Social and cultural expectations play a significant role in how the community and men themselves view their health needs. For example, many men and boys are expected to be tough and such social views have implications for attitudes towards illness and use of health services.

It is not the case that the health of men is more or less important than that of women. Rather the experiences of health and illness and of the health care system are different and require different responses.

Efforts to meet the health needs of boys and men must start at a young age and focus on prevention of ill-health and promotion of health enhancing behaviours for long term effectiveness.

Our Action Plan

- A National Men's Health Policy, with accompanying Men's and Boys' Health Programs;
- Promotion of age-related, comprehensive, regular men's health check-up's;
- Health services and health information in locations such as educational workplaces, pubs, sporting venues;
- Resources on health issues, such as healthy diet and weight, which are presented in a format that appeals to males and are culturally sensitive;
- Extended hours walk-in clinics for episodes of one-off first contact care;
- Greater use of targeted outreach services;
- Training of primary health care professionals in men's health issues, including promoting gendered approaches to health in undergraduate education;
- Reduced risk taking and use of violence by focusing on challenging and changing men's attitudes and behaviour, starting in early childhood;
- Better funding for services that: support men following relationship breakdown and transition into and out of the workforce; support and assist boys and men who have been abused or sexually assaulted; decrease problem gambling;

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improve the mental health of boys and men, in particular targeting depression, stress, and substance misuse; and, address the high suicide rates among men aged 25-44; and,

- Allocate resources according to the needs of particular subgroups of men.

The Issues

Australian men are more likely to get sick from serious health problems, such as cancer, and their death rates are also much higher from infancy through to old age. Men are also less aware and less willing than women to adopt a healthier lifestyle (except that they give up smoking at higher rates).

A boy baby born today in Australia can expect to live 76.2 years, while a girl baby can expect to live 82.2 years.

Substantial numbers of young boys experience physical and emotional abuse and neglect.

Men are much more likely to die from heart disease, cancer, and accidents than women.

The male suicide rate is about 4 times that of the female rate, and men aged 25-44 are at particular risk with rates in rural areas of particular concern.

Males are almost twice as likely to experience work-related injuries as females, account for 90.5% of all work-related deaths.

Men are more likely to engage in preventable risky behaviours (such as binge drinking, drink driving, speeding) which result in injury, disability or death.

Men are more likely to perpetrate violent crime and be victims for all offences except sexual assault and kidnapping/abduction.

Men are more likely to misuse alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs⁹ and have an inadequate intake of fruit and vegetables.

Males use health services less often than females.

Research has found that men from lower socio-economic and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, men with a mental illness or who are unemployed are more vulnerable to sickness than those in other sub groups.