



His and Hers Health

Why the differences matter as we age

It's no secret that men and women are different, and some of those differences are more than skin deep. As we age, men and women develop different healthcare needs, too. Some differences are obvious. For example, if you're a woman you can safely skip a prostate exam. But some distinctions are more subtle.

Here's how gender might impact your healthcare.



Doctor **Disconnect**

Many seniors today grew up in the age of “grin and bear it”. While that generational toughness definitely has its advantages, there are some things you absolutely have to see a doctor for. We’re looking directly at you, men.

Men are **80 percent** less likely than women to visit their physician regularly.

“We’re looking directly at you, **men**.”

Whether you’re a man or a woman, skipping the doctor is a serious mistake. It’s important to take care of minor issues before they develop into life-threatening problems. And there are some things like pneumonia and heart disease that won’t go away on their own, no matter how tough you are.

Men, think of it this way: With regular care, classic cars can run for decades. You don’t drive on a flat tire, check your oil regularly and take that chassis to the mechanic at the first sign of trouble. With routine maintenance, you’ll keep your motor running smoothly a lot longer.

Source: EverydayHealth.com

Straight to the Heart of the Matter

When you picture someone having a heart attack, you probably think of an older man clutching his chest, right? Well, surprise! After menopause, a natural decline in estrogen leaves women at roughly the same level of risk as men. Women who have had heart attacks most commonly report symptoms such as pressure, aching and tightness in the jaw and back, and even flu-like symptoms. In fact, only one in eight women reports chest pain at all, which is a classic symptom for men.

“Only **one in eight women** reports chest pain at all.”

Factors like high cholesterol, diabetes and high blood pressure increase your risk for cardiovascular disease, but regular exercise, quitting smoking and maintaining a diet low in saturated fat can help.



Sources: American Heart Association, heart.org; Webmd.com; Healthline.com; EliteDaily.com

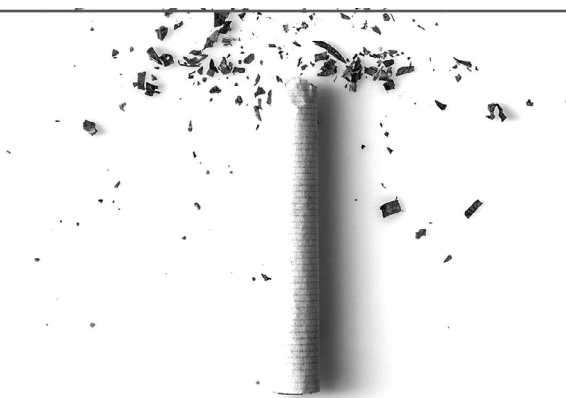
Clear the Air

What's the leading cause of cancer deaths for both men and women in the United States? **Answer: It's lung cancer, and it tends to affect men and women differently.**

Men tend to develop squamous cell lung cancer, and women tend to develop adenocarcinomas. Women who are non-smokers are three times more likely to develop lung cancer than men who are non-smokers, and though the average age when a person receives a lung cancer diagnosis is 70, women tending to be diagnosed slightly earlier. It's not all bad news for women though: At all stages of the disease, **women have a higher survival rate.**



“The average age when a person receives a **lung cancer diagnosis is 70**.”



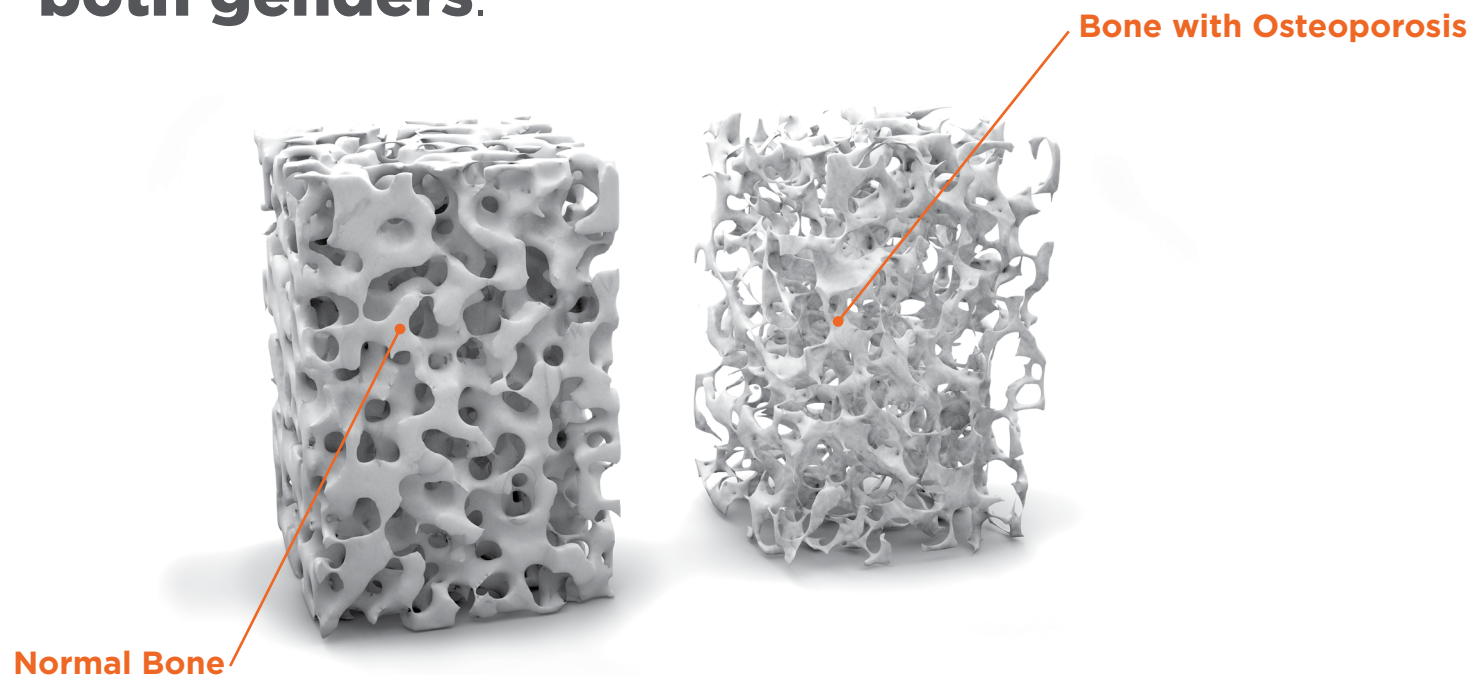
If you're a smoker, one of the best things you can do to decrease risk is to quit smoking. If you don't currently smoke or have never smoked, avoid secondhand smoke, test your home for Radon and learn about occupational hazards that might affect your lungs.

Sources: VeryWell.com; TED.com

Breaking Down Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis starts earlier and worsens faster in women due to hormone shifts from menopause, but around age 65 bone loss occurs at about the same rate for both genders. And whether male or female, an osteoporosis-related fracture can cause ongoing pain, loss of mobility and loss of independence.

“Around **age 65** bone loss occurs at about the **same rate for both genders.**”



If you've been diagnosed with osteoporosis, treatment could be as simple as a calcium supplement. There are also several medications on the market that can help with bone loss. Be sure to talk to your doctor about your treatment plan, since some medications for osteoporosis can affect other health conditions.

Sources: Webmd.com; Harvard Medicine, health.harvard.edu

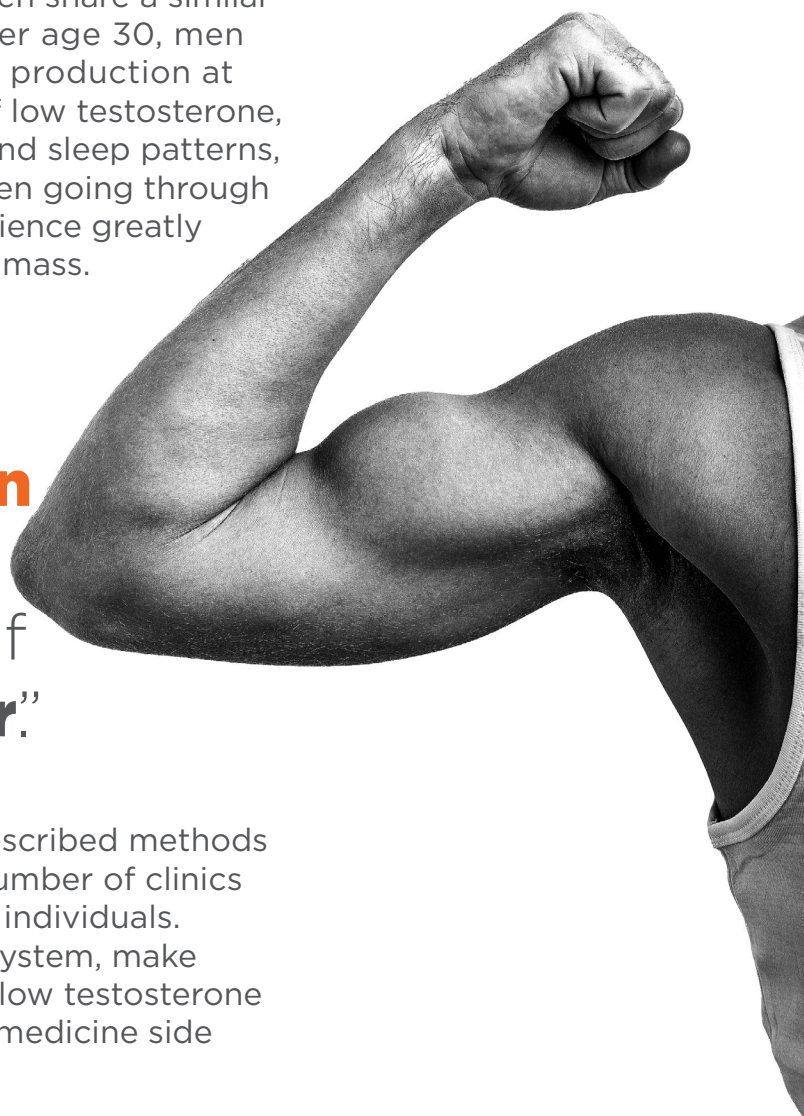
Man-opause

In both men and women, sex hormones like testosterone and estrogen decrease dramatically with age. In women, this condition — menopause — tends to come on fairly rapidly and is linked to familiar symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, mood changes, weight gain and thinning hair.

A growing body of evidence suggests that men share a similar experience, albeit much more gradually. After age 30, men experience a decline in natural testosterone production at a rate of about 1 percent a year. Symptoms of low testosterone, or low T, include changes in sexual function and sleep patterns, as well as physical and emotional changes. Men going through male menopause, or andropause, often experience greatly reduced energy levels and decreased muscle mass.

“**After age 30**, men experience a **decline in natural testosterone production** at a rate of about **1 percent a year**.”

Diet and exercise are the most commonly prescribed methods of dealing with low T, though an increasing number of clinics are offering testosterone therapy to qualified individuals. Before you go messing with your endocrine system, make sure to talk to your doctor. The symptoms of low testosterone production are very similar to thyroid issues, medicine side effects and even depression.



Sources: MayoClinic.org; EliteDaily.com

Let's Talk Treatment

The two genders don't just experience disease differently; they even experience diagnosis and treatment differently. For example, cardiac catheterization is a typical diagnostic procedure for cardiovascular disease that might not work as effectively for women as it does for men, since women tend to accumulate plaque along the artery more diffusely. Other techniques like an intracoronary ultrasound could be more effective for women.

In both men and women, lung cancer often responds similarly to the traditional chemotherapy treatments. However, some of the newer therapies have shown to be more effective in women. Why? Research conducted on particular lung cancer drugs has found that some of the genetic mutations targeted were more common in women.

Osteoporosis is another example. Since women tend to suffer from osteoporosis more than men, many of the therapies have been tested solely on women, which means the effectiveness of treatments or their side effects for men aren't fully understood.

The bottom line: if you have questions or concerns about how gender affects your treatment, **talk to your doctor.**

Sources: Harvard Medicine, health.harvard.edu;
TED.com; VeryWell.com

