

Focus on... men's health

Everything you need to know about his health

This week marks International Men's Health week. We spoke to Dr Fergus Glynn, a GP and doctor with videoDoc, to learn more about men's health.

How important is it for men to take charge of their health?

It is crucial because he is the only person with the capacity to positively impact his future health. So much significant ill-health can be preventable by undertaking non-invasive health screening, ideally with a health care professional on a regular basis.

What advice would you give to readers who are trying to encourage the man in their life to get a check-up?

A core principle of encouraging such behaviour is to 'hand back' responsibility for health to the man in your life, while explaining that, equally, the consequences of future health or ill-health will be largely his to bear the burden of or to enjoy the fruits of. It is important to explain that while you remain concerned about the impacts of future significant ill-health, describing in as much detail as possible the consequences, using real life examples from within the community, you really have to insist that it is his responsibility.

IN HIS 30s...

WHAT HEALTH ISSUES SHOULD HE BE AWARE OF?

There remains a risk, though very minor, of testicular cancer in one's 30s and so any unexplained or new testicular lump does need to be assessed with their GP who will decide on the need for imaging such as ultrasound. The vast majority of new testicular lumps are benign. Every man in his 30s should have a health

assessment. And the simple reason is that the foundation for significant ill-health in ones 40s and 50s are laid down now and identifying and managing risk factors at this point can prevent future significant and sometimes catastrophic health events in later years.

Are there any essential tests that should be carried out?

Blood pressure should be monitored every one to two years, even if there is no family history of early onset high blood pressure. High blood pressure is a crucial risk factor, even in the absence of high cholesterol, for early onset angina and heart attacks and can also be a marker for structural problems of the heart or large arteries. It's a simple, non-invasive intervention that only takes seconds. Cholesterol and blood sugar testing should also be carried out as well as a simple urine tests. Screening tests for coeliac disease and haemochromatosis will also be completed, particularly if there is a relevant family history.

IN HIS 40s...

WHAT HEALTH ISSUES SHOULD HE BE AWARE OF?

If they haven't done so yet, then encouraging them to attend their GP for the simple health assessment as described should be seen as a priority. If there is a family history of a close male relative developing a chronic disease in their 40s, then his GP is ideally placed to suggest a set of screening investigations.

Are there any essential tests that should be carried out?

The tests identified for men in their 30s equally apply to men in their 40s. Depending on family history, additional blood tests or investigations may be suggested as described above. Very

infrequently, men in their 40s are diagnosed with prostate cancer. Anybody concerned about early onset prostate cancer or any other type of cancer should arrange to have a

face-to-face consultation with their GP to agree on an individual screening plan.

IN HIS 50s (AND ABOVE)...

WHAT HEALTH ISSUES SHOULD HE BE AWARE OF?

The risk of prostate and colorectal cancer rise modestly during this decade. While the risks for the average male are quite low, if there is a family history of either of these, then it is crucial that they meet with their GP to decide on the most appropriate screening plan. Equally, any concerning symptom suggestive

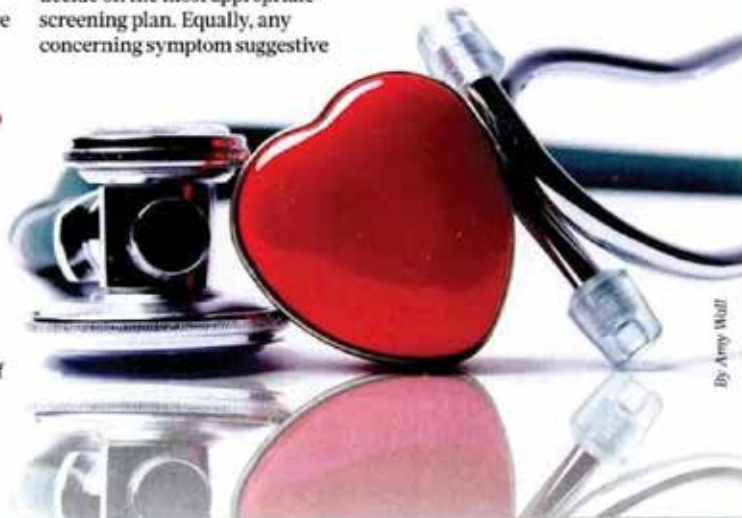
of either of these cancers such as new rectal bleeding or new unexplained change in bowel habit or blood in the urine in an individual with or without a relevant family history should prompt immediate investigation. Prevention, diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure, ischaemic heart disease, diabetes and smoking-related chronic lung disease should remain central to the conversation as they affect a far higher proportion of the Irish male population in their 50s.

Are there any essential tests that should be carried out?

Screening for prostate cancer should begin in one's 50s and again, I would recommend that every man talk to his GP about how best to plan this. Irrespective of family history and no matter how robust and resilient your husband or brother or father might feel, every man should meet his GP regularly (at least every two years) for simple health screening and preventative lifestyle advice. **WW**

Dr Fergus Glynn is a GP and doctor at videoDoc, the online doctor. You can download the videoDoc app by logging on to www.videodoc.ie

"Every man should meet his GP regularly"



By Amy Wall