



  English

Prevention: Man Smart, Woman Smarter

Prevention: Man Smart, Woman Smarter

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When I was in college, I wanted to be a registered dietitian. Healthy eating and exercise habits are key to preventing many diseases for both women and men, and I thought that becoming a dietitian would benefit not only myself and my patients, but also especially my family and friends. Unfortunately, I'm not very good at math or science, so that career didn't work out for me, but I still use the knowledge I picked up from various health and nutrition courses and internships to try to help my family and friends be healthier.

I especially focus on helping the men in my life get healthier: my dad, my brother, and my fiancé. Why? Because men have a lower life expectancy than women – on average, men die five years younger than women.¹ Because men are more likely to die from many of the top 10 causes of death, most of which are preventable, including diabetes, heart disease, and liver or kidney diseases.² And because men often avoid seeing their doctors, and seeing a doctor is a key step in prevention.³ Men are also much less likely to put on sunscreen when they go outside. Okay, I made that last one up, but it's true for the men in my life at least!

One of my favorite bands is the Grateful Dead, and they often covered a song called "Man Smart, Woman Smarter." While I don't totally agree and am not

promoting one gender over another in any way, I have to admit that science suggests that women are “smarter” at prevention than men are. This is a good thing for the health of women overall, but it also means that we can help the men in our lives get better and smarter at prevention.

And June is a great time to start: it’s Men’s Health Month, which focuses on raising awareness of preventable health problems and encourages early detection and treatment of diseases for men and boys.

I try to remind my dad, brother, and fiancé of easy ways to stay healthy without nagging. This is harder than it sounds, but it’s super important! I try to help them make healthier food choices (my dad calls me his snack monitor), force them to exercise with me even when it’s the last thing they want to do, or remind them to put on sunscreen whenever they go outside (especially when they visit me here in Colorado, because we’re from New York and the Colorado sun is STRONG).

I also try to make sure they’re seeing a doctor and dentist regularly to stay on track and catch any small issues before they turn into big problems. They may find me incredibly annoying, especially when I’m in peak snack monitor mode, but they know it’s because I really care about them and want them to stay healthy. They may not listen to me every time, but I’ll keep trying anyway, especially during Men’s Health Month. This month, let’s all make a conscious effort to encourage the men in our lives to start developing healthy habits that can lead to healthier lives. Even small things can help make a difference and turn those stats around!

Sources

1. Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School: Why men often die earlier than women – 2016: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/why-men-often-die-earlier-than-women-201602199137>
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3. Cleveland Clinic Newsroom: Cleveland Clinic Survey: Men will do almost anything to avoid going to the doctor – 2019:

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