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Healthy Aging: Thriving as a Man Over 65

Entering the senior years is a powerful opportunity to focus on longevity, cognitive clarity, and maintaining peak physical independence. For men over the age of 65, optimizing health requires a proactive approach to cardiovascular care, bone and muscle preservation, specialized cancer screenings, and careful medication management.

Core Senior Screenings for Men

Preventive screenings change as you cross the 65-year milestone. Work with your provider to keep these essential markers on your radar:

- **Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA):** If you are between ages 65 and 75 and have *ever* smoked cigarettes, you should receive a one-time ultrasound screening to check for an enlarged blood vessel in the abdomen.
 - **Colorectal Cancer:** Routine screening is strongly recommended through age 75. Between ages 76 and 85, discuss with your provider whether to continue based on your overall health.
 - **Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) Testing:** From ages 55 to 69, PSA screenings should be based on shared clinical decision-making. At age 70 and older, routine PSA screening is generally no longer recommended, but you should discuss your individual risk factors with your provider.
 - **Cardiovascular and Diabetes Vital Checks:** Continue tracking your blood pressure regularly (you can log your numbers easily using the [Good Health Outcomes Resources Page](#)). Ensure your cholesterol and A1C levels are reviewed every 1 to 2 years.
 - **Sensory and Bone Health:** Schedule annual vision and hearing exams, as untreated sensory loss drastically increases the risk of cognitive decline and falls. While bone density scans are standard for women, men over 65 should get a baseline DEXA scan if they have risk factors like a history of fractures or chronic steroid use.
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Preserving Structural and Cardiovascular Vitality

Defeating Muscle Loss (Sarcopenia)

Men naturally lose muscle mass and bone density as they age, which can compromise balance and metabolic health.

- **The Strength Solution:** Lean muscle mass directly regulates insulin sensitivity and protects your joints. Incorporate resistance exercises or weight training at least twice a week, focusing on major muscle groups.
- **Protein and Nutrition:** Ensure you are getting adequate high-quality protein distributed across your meals to support muscle repair, alongside foods rich in Vitamin D and Calcium.

Advanced Fluid and Circulatory Habits

- **Structured Hydration:** The biological sensation of thirst diminishes significantly after age 65. Do not wait until you feel thirsty to drink. Sip water, herbal teas, or broths consistently throughout the day. Review the [Home Management of Dehydration](#) protocols to recognize early signs like lightheadedness or fatigue.
- **Aerobic Endurance:** Aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise (such as brisk walking, swimming, or cycling) weekly to keep the heart muscle strong and your arteries elastic.

High-Risk Medications to Avoid or Limit

Changes in kidney and liver function mean that medications stay in your system much longer than they used to. Protect your body by auditing your medicine cabinet for these common culprits:

Eliminate Diphenhydramine (Benadryl): As detailed in the [Five Common Medications to Avoid](#) guide, older adults should strictly avoid diphenhydramine. It causes severe anti-cholinergic side effects, including acute confusion, dry mouth, blurred vision, urinary retention, and a significantly elevated risk of dangerous falls.

Rethink Daily Aspirin: If you are taking an over-the-counter baby aspirin (81mg) purely for "prevention" but have never actually had a heart attack or stroke, current clinical data shows that the risk of major internal bleeding outweighs the cardiovascular benefit. Consult your provider before stopping or starting an aspirin regimen.

Exercise Caution with NSAIDs: Avoid the chronic use of oral Ibuprofen or Naproxen for arthritis or joint pain, as they strain the kidneys and can cause gastrointestinal ulcers. Switch to safer localized alternatives, like prescription topical anti-inflammatory gels.

Medication Safety Checklist

As you manage everyday aches and pain, pay close attention to your over-the-counter choices:

- **Manage Pain Safely:** If you regularly use NSAIDs (like Ibuprofen or Advil) for muscle strains, joint pain, or headaches, always take them with food to protect your stomach lining. Review your [Pain Management Guide](#) to understand how these medications affect your kidneys and blood pressure.
 - **Avoid Ineffective Decongestants:** If you encounter sinus or cold symptoms, avoid oral products containing Phenylephrine, as clinical data has proven they are no more effective than a placebo. Refer to the guide on [Five Common Medications to Avoid](#) for better alternatives.
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The Senior Wellness Strategy: At your next wellness visit, be sure to provide a list of *every* prescription, over-the-counter pill, and supplement you take. Reviewing this list with your provider ensures you are completely eliminating duplicate therapies and avoiding high-risk drug interactions.

The above information was reviewed and validated by David Campbell-O'Dell, DNP, APRN-IP, FNP-BC, FAANP