

## 10 Necessary Health Screenings for Men Over 40

Whether you are super fit with a great diet, or you have a few pounds to lose and may have some not-so-healthy eating habits, it's a good idea to get certain health screenings once you reach 40. Talk to your doctor about checking these 10 essential markers in order to stay on top of your health and wellness game.

### 1. Blood Sugar

Blood glucose levels are a clear marker of prediabetes and should be checked annually. If your doctor finds that your blood sugar is elevated, you can, luckily, adjust your diet and lifestyle to bring it down. Risk factors for having high blood glucose levels are obesity, inactivity, high levels of abdominal fat, smoking, and heart disease. A normal fasting blood glucose level is 70 - 99 mg/DL. The prediabetic range is between 100 and 125. Anyone with a fasting blood glucose level over 125 might be diagnosed as having Type 2 Diabetes.

### 2. Vitamin D Levels

It turns out that many men are deficient in Vitamin D. Low levels of this hormone are tied to many diseases. It's now thought that a level of at least 50 nanograms is desirable to be in the optimal zone. If you are low, you can take supplements or increase your intake of fortified dairy products, or both. Of course, speak to your doctor before making any changes to supplements you're taking.

### 3. HDL

HDL (High-Density Lipoprotein) is the part of the cholesterol makeup that should be high. While it might seem counterintuitive, low levels of this type of cholesterol actually put you at risk for a heart attack. If your HDL is at least 90, however, you have a minimal chance of developing heart disease. You can increase this number by eating healthy fats, exercising at a moderate intensity for 20 minutes four times per week, or losing five pounds of body fat.

### 4. Resting Heart Rate

A healthy resting heart rate for men over 40 is about 60 beats per minute. If you find that yours is elevated, after consulting with your doctor, there are ways to lower it. You can engage in moderate-intensity cardio for 40 minutes four times per week. Or, you could do two 20-minute HIIT sessions per week. A healthy resting heart rate is associated with being fit and having a healthy heart.

## **5. Semen Volume**

Even if you're not trying to conceive, the amount of semen that is produced during ejaculation is a sign of prostate health. It might be a touchy subject and an awkward test method, but it's worth it to see if your levels are optimal. Most doctors agree that you should be able to produce at least 5 ml per sample. You can increase your semen volume by staying hydrated, eating healthily, and exercising. Also, limit alcohol, quit smoking, and avoid hot tubs.

## **6. PSA Score**

PSA stands for prostate-specific antigen, and it is tested to measure the health of your prostate. Lower levels are associated with a smaller risk of contracting prostate cancer. Usually, anything below 4 ng/ml is considered healthy. Certain nutrients in food can actually lower your PSA score – lycopene (found in tomatoes), vitamin C, selenium, and vitamin E. Certain parts of the population are actually at a higher risk for having an elevated PSA score – African American men and anyone with a family history of prostate cancer.

## **7. Glaucoma Screening**

There are several painless tests that eye doctors use to determine if you have glaucoma, or if you're at risk for developing it. These should be done yearly. Glaucoma is a particular type of damage that is done to your optic nerve and can result in vision problems and blindness. Regular exercise at a moderate level of intensity has actually been shown to decrease your risk of developing glaucoma. Also, quit smoking and limit your caffeine if you are at risk for developing this disease.

## **8. Cardiac Stress Test**

A cardiac stress test is an extremely accurate way to evaluate your heart health. If you're thinking of starting a new cardio exercise program, or just want to see how fit you truly are, ask your doctor about getting this screening done. Normally, you do a particular type of progressive aerobic exercise in a clinical setting while being monitored. They measure how well your heart can react to the stress of exercise and how well it recovers. You should definitely have a cardiac stress test done if you are showing signs of heart disease, like chest pains, shortness of breath, and an irregular heartbeat.

## **9. Blood Pressure**

High blood pressure can cause a myriad of problems in your body. That's why it's a good idea to have your blood pressure checked at least once a year. A normal systolic measurement (the top number) is anything between 100 and 120, and a normal diastolic measurement (the bottom number) is anything

between 70 and 80. Don't wait until you have obvious symptoms of hypertension because many who have high blood pressure have no symptoms at all. Some signs that you may have hypertension are dizziness, facial flushing, and the appearance of blood spots in your eyes. There are, thankfully, many natural ways to lower your blood pressure if it is high – exercise, a healthy diet, less salt intake, and decreasing your stress levels.

## **10. Colonoscopy**

No one wants to get a colonoscopy. Besides the embarrassment of the actual procedure, there is the discomfort of the preparation. However, if you have a strong family history of colon cancer or polyps, it's a good idea to get a colonoscopy starting at age 40. In addition, if you have ulcerative colitis, you'd be a good candidate for an early colonoscopy as well. Colon cancer is one of the most successfully treated cancers, so it's worth it to catch it early.

While not all of these screenings need to happen yearly, it's a good idea to discuss with your healthcare provider how often you need to have certain screenings done. It will mostly depend on your age, overall wellness, and family history.