

HEALTHY, WEALTHY AND WISE

MEN'S HEALTH WEEK

10 - 16
JUNE
2013



Men's Health Week has a message for blokes – It's time to “man up” and take care of yourself. Men don't think about their health often enough and to draw more attention to this issue, the Men's Health Information and Resource Centre at UWS will run Men's Health Week from June 10-16.

According to UWS's David Thompson, the approach by Men's Health Week is to run local events and activities, so local services, organisations and employers can engage with men and boys in their community in a way that is friendly, inviting and understanding.

The vast majority of the 23,000 taxi drivers in NSW are men, so METER is running a special report on men's health to raise awareness of the issues.

Why is a special week for men's health necessary you ask? A look at the statistics will show you.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, a boy born in Australia in 2010 has a life expectancy of 78.0 years while a baby girl born at the same time could expect to live to 82.3 years old. Right from the start, boys suffer more illness, more accidents and die earlier than their female counterparts.

Men take their own lives at four times the rate of women (that's five men a day on average).

Accidents, cancer and heart disease all account for the majority of male deaths.

The gap between men and women in some cases is stark. For example, nearly 127 males per 100,000 die of the biggest killer, Ischaemic Heart Disease compared to 73 women per 100,000. Lung cancer kills 48 males per 100,000 but only 23.5 women. Deaths from transport accidents for males is 9.6 per 100,000 compared to 3.2 for women.

Men suffer from greater rates of almost every illness conceivable, yet there is still

little recognition or awareness of what men need from health and what it means to be a healthy man in today's world.

What is the impact on your health of spending 12 hours a day in your cab?

Recent research has found that adults who spend 11 or more hours a day sitting are at a 40% increased risk of dying in the next three years compared with those who sit for fewer than four hours.

In the largest study of ageing in the Southern Hemisphere, researchers from the University of Sydney assessed self-reported data from 22,497 men and women 45 years or older, as part of a larger analysis of ageing among more than 200,000 people across Australia.

After taking into account factors such as gender, age, weight, physical activity and health status, they determined sitting for long hours was associated with a much higher death risk.

Another recent study by the University of Western Sydney found office workers, truck drivers (and you can substitute taxi drivers) and couch potatoes who spend more than four hours of each day sitting down are more likely to experience chronic disease such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure.

The traditional approach to health is that it is the responsibility of individuals. This approach plays out in public health campaigns like anti-smoking, stop speeding, cut down on alcohol, eat more fruit, don't be a bloody idiot, etc. These campaigns

certainly have a place and can provide some level of behavioural changes. But they are expensive, time-consuming to implement and provides questionable value.

Men's Health Week focuses on those who can work with and alongside men and boys to influence their health and wellbeing. This approach is more likely to help people find healthier ways of living because it takes into account their living and working circumstances, it builds on local people and local resources, and it doesn't lecture men and boys about the 'things they should do more of and the things they should do less of' which actually deter people from improving their health.

By running local events and activities, local services, organisations and employers can engage with men and boys in their community in a way that is friendly, inviting and understanding. And the research shows us that appropriately engaging with men and boys is the way to create conversations and increased motivation to improve health in all its forms.

So as a taxi driver, recognise that you are one of the prime targets for the messages of Men's Health Week. Take time to work out how you can tap into solutions with other drivers or your family – your life might depend on it.