

Healthy habits for men



It is no secret that men and women face different health challenges. Being a 'tough guy' puts more men in hospital, for longer. Research shows that men aged over 65 are in worse shape when it comes to every health condition that is not related to male or female anatomy ([Ten to Men 2022](#)).

Get a check up

Denial, delay, and hoping things come right is why men end up in hospital more than women. Not knowing where to start is another barrier. However, since the COVID pandemic, [telehealth](#) has made the health system easier to use and more accessible for most people. If you haven't seen a doctor for a long time, do yourself a favour and book a telehealth appointment today.



Prioritise exercise and maintain muscle

Many of us can make improvements when it comes to our [diet](#), [exercise](#), [sleep](#), and [relaxation habits](#). Exercise, including muscle-strengthening exercises such as resistance training, can help improve your brain function and boost your mental health ([BJSM 2023](#)).

- **Maintaining muscle** is more effective for strong bones than any supplement. Regular muscle activity also improves insulin resistance.
- **Being strong helps with balance** as you age and can help to [prevent falls](#).
- **Exercise lowers stress and anxiety**, helping to improve your mood and quality of sleep.
- **Use it or lose it!** Research shows that exercise improves your health even if started later in life ([BMJ 2023](#)). If you have any medical conditions such as [diabetes](#), [hypertension](#), [arthritis](#), or heart disease, see your health professional before beginning a new exercise program.





You are not alone

More than 43% of Australian men report feelings of loneliness ([Healthy Male 2023](#)). However, there are many programs designed to help men connect with one another and social clubs that welcome new members. For example, three popular organisations with community-based networks across Australia:

- **[Australian Men's Shed Association](#)** members come from all walks of life. It's one of Australia's largest male-based community development organisations.
- **[The Men's Table](#)** is a safe place to share and be heard in a confidential and non-judgemental environment.
- **[The Tough Guy Book Club](#)** was built by guys who don't read much. It's about having real conversations with like-minded men.

It can sometimes feel intimidating to put yourself out there but remind yourself that every great journey begins with that first step.

The LiveUp Navigation service can help you find a group or activity that interests you on 1800 971 951 or support@liveup.org.au. The LiveUp Navigation service is free and completely confidential.

Seek support

If you would like to speak to someone one-on-one, there are services available to you, such as:

- **MensLine** is a free telephone and online counselling service offering support for Australian men anywhere and at any time. **Call 1300 78 99 78.**
- **FriendLine** supports anyone who's feeling lonely, or just wants a chat from 8am – 6pm, 7 days a week. FriendLine's not a crisis service but conversations are anonymous, and their friendly volunteers are ready for a yarn. **Call 1800 424 287.**
- **BeyondBlue** is a mental health support service that connects you to a person to talk to on those days when something isn't quite right, or things just seem too much. You can [chat to a counsellor online](#) or **call 1300 22 4636.**
- **Open Arms** Veterans and Families Counselling provides free and confidential counselling to anyone who has served at least one day in the Australian Defence Force. They also provide counselling for partners and families. Open Arms can be contacted 24/7 and all their counselling is arranged by **calling 1800 011 046.**
- **LifeLine's** crisis support service is available 24/7. Anyone in Australia can speak to a trained Crisis Supporter over the phone, any time of the day or night. **Call 13 11 14 or text 0477 131 114.**





Volunteer and use your skills

Men talk and bond doing activities. Men also have skills that organisations need and value. This is why [volunteering](#) is a way that men can stay connected and make friends after retiring.

- **Volunteering regularly gives retirement structure and purpose.** It's work on your terms and you get the satisfaction of having a role in an organisation.
- **There are voluntary positions all over Australia.** Find something that matches what you're interested in. This is a good way of meeting and mixing with like-minded people.
- **Search the Volunteering Australia [GoVolunteer](#) database** or visit your local volunteering organisation, library, or resource centre for help finding the right thing for you to do.

It's never too late

Perhaps you got used to bouncing back when you were younger, and now it's different. Perhaps you're looking after someone else who needs you to be the strong and healthy one.

The good news is it's never too late to change, and the fastest road to better health is to swap one bad habit with a new healthy habit. Yes, you start with just one habit and build up gradually.



Change one unhealthy habit

It's hard to stop doing something. It's much easier to start doing something new. This is why it's helpful to think about habits as only one part of a three-step process:

1. a *trigger* or reason
2. a routine (the habit)
3. a reward (the pleasure we get from the habit)

Think about what triggers the one habit you want to change for the better. Whenever you can, stay away from what triggers your old habit. When you cannot avoid a trigger, swap your old habit with a new healthy one and then follow-up with a new healthier reward.

When we break one habit, we have a better chance of also breaking the flow-on routine. This is why it becomes easier to change other unhealthy habits after we learn one new habit.

More helpful information

If you need more information, take the [LiveUp quiz](#) or get in touch with one of our helpful team on 1800 951 971.

You can find more tips and advice by following the links below:

- [Healthy Male](#): Evidence-based, easy-to-understand information on male health in Australia.
- [What is the one gender gap where men are worse off and how can we close it](#): ABC Radio National Life Matters feature that explores what can be done to turn things around.
- Here are [more tips for creating healthy habits](#).

References

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2. Singh B, Olds T, Curtis R, et al *Effectiveness of physical activity interventions for improving depression, anxiety and distress: an overview of systematic reviews*, British Journal of Sports Medicine Published Online First: 16 February 2023. <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/early/2023/03/02/bjsports-2022-106195>
3. James S, Chiou Y, Fatih N, et al *Timing of physical activity across adulthood on later-life cognition: 30 years follow-up in the 1946 British birth cohort* Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry 2023;94:349–356. <https://jnnp.bmj.com/content/94/5/349>
4. Healthy Male (2023). *Loneliness and social isolation*. <https://www.healthymale.org.au/mens-health/loneliness-and-social-isolation>

CONTACT US

Website: liveup.org.au

Email: support@liveup.org.au

Phone: 1800 951 971

Facebook: facebook.com/LiveUpAus

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