

MAN MOT

Man MOT: DIY health checks & challenges



150
mins



5
a day



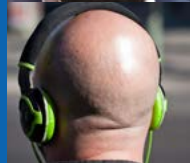
36
inches



120/
80



14
units





MEN'S HEALTH FORUM

The Men's Health Forum's Man Manuals are full of easy-to-read information on a wide range of men's health subjects. Founded in 1994, the MHF is the independent voice for the health and wellbeing of men and boys in England, Scotland and Wales. Our goal is the best possible physical and mental health and wellbeing for all men and boys.

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OTHER MEN'S HEALTH FORUM PUBLICATIONS

Our award-winning Man Manuals - men's health made easy. Recent titles include The Man Manual, Man MOT, Man MOT for the Mind and Size Isn't Everything (on penis health). Available as single copies or in bulk. Some titles also available as ebooks or as PDF manuals.

shop.menshealthforum.org.uk/mm

We also offer publications for professionals and training.

This publication has been fully referenced and researched under the sadly now defunct Department of Health Information Standard and reviewed and approved by the Forum's medical peer review panel chaired by Dr John Chisholm.

A full list of references is available at:
menshealthforum.org.uk/MMreferences

The MHF encourages your feedback at:
menshealthforum.org.uk/MMfeedback





HOW ARE YOU?

Fact: one man in five dies before he's 65. It's not just men in mid-life, it's young men too. And the causes are not just physical, they can also be in our head. This booklet asks how healthy are you and how healthy is your lifestyle? It helps you answer these questions using simple measures and checks.

Then it challenges you: how will you get healthier?

There are places throughout the booklet for you to record where you are right now and to keep an eye on the changes over time.

Your first challenge - should you choose to accept it - is to read this booklet through and answer all the questions as honestly as you can.

There are three sections:

- > **how's your heart - page 4**
- > **how's your head - page 9**
- > **how's your health in general - page 13.**

You can start wherever you want. Tip: if you're over 40, you might want to start with heart health; if you're under 40, you might want to start with head health. Our 25 challenges are suggestions to get you thinking. You might want to follow them. You might want to vary or replace them. There's space for you to record the checks you make and the challenges you decide to take up.

This booklet can be read on its own or used alongside the Men's Health Forum's Man manual or the Forum's training.



CHALLENGE #1 • Know your local services

Find out the opening hours of your GP surgery and all the services offered including online. (Register as a patient if you haven't already.) Where's your nearest pharmacy? Check out their services. Then you can find a dentist...



HOW'S YOUR HEART?

These pages explain the health measures used in the NHS Health Check. They're mostly about heart health. You should be offered an NHS Health Check by your GP if you're over 40 (if you're registered with one, of course). But it's useful to know about this stuff and keep an eye on it at any age.

If you're offered an NHS Health Check or other screening, it makes sense to take the opportunity. (The NHS also has a 'heart age' tool online.)

CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is a fatty substance in the blood. Too much can block the arteries causing heart disease or stroke. There are two types. LDL cholesterol is the bad one. HDL is the good one.

Although most cholesterol is made in the body, what we eat also makes a difference. Eating a balanced diet (see p13) helps keep cholesterol balanced: high HDL, low LDL. (Think LD = least desirable and HD = highly desirable.)

BLOOD PRESSURE

The pressure of your blood in the arteries - the higher the number the greater the blood pressure (bp). People with high blood pressure are three times more likely to have heart disease or stroke. It's normally given as two figures such as 120/80: the first is when the heart contracts (systolic) and pressure is at its highest and the second when the heart is resting (diastolic).

CHALLENGE #2 • Reduce salt and sugar

Salt increases blood pressure. **Sugar** increases waistline (which can increase blood pressure). So don't ADD them to food and drink. On labels, choose low-sodium (salt) and low sugar. But beware of artificial sweeteners. True, they have no calories but they won't reduce your liking for sugar and may have health risks of their own.



You can track your bp yourself. You can buy a monitor (ideally, get one that has a cuff that goes round your arm like the doctors use rather than one that measures at the wrist) but in many GP surgeries you can just walk in and use a free-standing monitor.

YOUR WAIST

In an NHS health check they'll calculate your BMI (body mass index). This is a ratio that compares your weight to your height. You can work it out like this:

$$\text{Weight (in kilograms)} \div \text{height} \times \text{height (in metres)}$$

And this is what it all means:

People come in all shapes and sizes so any BMI from 18.5 to 25 is considered to be healthy.

- > If your BMI is below 18.5, you are probably underweight.
- > If your BMI is over 25, you are probably overweight.
- > If your BMI is over 30, you are classified as obese.

Ethnicity matters. Asian men are advised to keep their BMI below 23 because of the increased risk of type 2 diabetes. Black men and other minority groups are also advised to maintain a BMI below 25 for the same reason.

But since muscle is heavier than fat, BMI can be a little misleading. Some sports players, for example, have BMIs which on the face of it look too high.

To make it easier, your waist measurement works just as well. As a man:

- > you have a **higher** risk of health problems if your waist size is more than 94cm (37 inches)
- > you are at an **even higher** risk if your waist size is more than 102cm (40 inches).

Measure your waist - not your trouser size. Measure round your belly button (and no holding your stomach in!)

BP TOO HIGH	above 140/90
GETTING HIGH	above 120/80
OK	between 120/80 and 90/60
TOO LOW	below 90/60





BLOOD SUGAR

In an NHS health check, they check your blood sugar - the amount of glucose in your blood - with a pin prick of blood. It's an easy way to see whether you might have diabetes. You can't do this at home so look out for diabetes symptoms. If you have any, tell your GP who can perform some simple tests.

The symptoms of diabetes include:

- > feeling unusually thirsty
- > peeing more often, especially at night
- > feeling unusually tired
- > loss of muscle
- > frequent itching around the penis
- > blurred vision
- > cuts or wounds healing more slowly
- > unexplained weight-loss.

CHALLENGE #3 • Laugh

Laughing is good for the head and the heart. Find something everyday that makes you laugh - a TV programme or meeting with friends is great but if all else fails just make yourself laugh. (The evidence is that the benefits of laughter are the same whether it's real or fake.)

Bonus points: laughing together with others (not at others) is the best for health.

YOUR RISK OF A HEART ATTACK

In a health check they'll also talk to you about your smoking (page 14), alcohol intake (page 13), diet (page 13) and your general lifestyle. They'll give you a cardiovascular risk score which is your chance of developing heart disease over the next ten years. This is based on the answers you give but also your family history and ethnic background.

Heart and stroke problems run in families. So can cancer and mental health challenges. So find out if your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles have had any of these illnesses, especially if they died young.

Make sure your GP knows your family health history.





CHALLENGE #4 • Sing

Sing. Yes, that's it, sing. In the shower, at karaoke, join a choir. Sing as often as you can. Good for both head and heart.

Bonus points: dance too (but best not in the shower!)

WILL IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Yes. Look at these four challenges:

- > not smoking
- > drinking fewer than 14 units of alcohol a week
- > eating 5 portions of fruit and veg a day
- > taking at least half an hour of exercise a day



How many of these can you tick? Research suggests that doing all four adds about 14 years to your life. That's three World Cups! Plus, anything that's good for the heart is good for the brain too, reducing the risk of dementia.

CHALLENGE #5 • Sleep

Improve your sleep. Poor sleep is linked to heart disease and obesity. Improve your sleep by avoiding screens (phones, tablets, laptops etc) for ONE HOUR before bed. (The blue-light keeps you awake so it's fine in the morning). Try half an hour at first and build up. Monitor if you sleep better.

Bonus points: skip TV too and don't have one in the bedroom.

CHALLENGE #6 • Be cool

Walk away. This could be the most important challenge of all. Next time you're in an argument, walk away. It won't just help your blood pressure but your sense of being in control too. Do it whenever you feel the red mist fall.

Bonus points: A simple mindfulness exercise when stressed or angry can really help. Don't know one? Search: '3 minute breathing space'.



CHECKS AND CHALLENGES...

The hard copy of Man MOT includes a page here to record waist measurements, BMI and blood pressure. You can also record any challenges you set yourself.



HOW'S YOUR HEAD?

Good mental health is good in itself. We all want to feel happier. But it also helps your physical health. If your head is in a good place you're less likely to get ill but, if you do, you're more likely to spot it and do something about it.

The trouble is the question 'how are you?' is difficult to answer accurately. We all say 'fine' if someone asks us.

Look at the fourteen questions on the next page. They ask you to say how you **feel** - not what you think or what you know, but what you feel. The questions are widely used to help health professionals get a handle on how we're really feeling about life. You can use them to help figure out how good or bad you're really feeling. The more honest you can be in your answers, the better guide you'll get.



CHALLENGE #7 • Talk

Talk. Talk to a friend every day - face to face is best, phone is fine, online if you have to (but back and forth text chat is better than just posting to social media).

Bonus points: call someone you haven't spoken to for over a year.

CHALLENGE #8 • Join

Join a community group - being part of a group is known to boost wellbeing. It can be anything from art to zumba, but make it local. How about mindfulness? (See Challenge #6)

Bonus points: become one of the organisers.



1. I've been feeling optimistic about the future.
2. I've been feeling useful.
3. I've been feeling relaxed.
4. I've been feeling interested in other people.
5. I've had energy to spare.
6. I've been dealing with problems well.
7. I've been thinking clearly.
8. I've been feeling good about myself.
9. I've been feeling close to other people.
10. I've been feeling confident.
11. I've been able to make up my own mind about things.
12. I've been feeling loved.
13. I've been interested in new things.
14. I've been feeling cheerful.

It's important not to get too hung up on the scores. They're most useful for monitoring your mood changes over time. If you score higher in a fortnight than you do today, it suggests your head health is moving in the right direction. Whatever your score, we reckon that trying some of the challenges in this section will help.

Score all the questions like this:

- a) If you feel like this NONE of the time, score 1 point
- b) if you feel like this RARELY, score 2 and so on...
- c) SOME of the time (3 points)
- d) OFTEN (4 points)
- e) ALL of the time (5 points)



CHALLENGE #9 • Try something new

Try something new. It's good for your brain and you'll feel better too. It could be anything from learning a new skill (a language, musical instrument, cooking, bike maintenance etc) to taking on new responsibilities at work.

Bonus points: for something different to do everyday, check out the Action For Happiness calendars (actionforhappiness.org/calendars).



CHALLENGE #10 • Volunteer

Volunteer. Volunteer for something - doing something for others is proven to make us feel better (so we're doing something for ourselves too). If you do something physical, so much the better.

WHAT'S THE SCORE?

The questions on page 10 (called the WEMWBS - the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale) have been widely used. As a rule of thumb:

- > Under 32 points: your wellbeing score is very low.
- > 32-40 points: your wellbeing score is below average.
- > 40-59 points: your wellbeing score is average.
- > 59-70 points: your wellbeing score is above average.

-32

32-40

40-59

59+

But wherever you are, getting more active, maintaining contact with others, keeping on learning, being aware of yourself and of the world around you and reaching out to others will help you feel better. Check out our challenges.

HEALTH WARNING

If you score low and still score low a fortnight or month later, you may want to talk to someone. This could be a friend, family member or health professional. But if you'd prefer someone who doesn't know you, the Samaritans are not just for people who feel suicidal. You can talk to their volunteers anonymously at any time at all by phone (116 123), email or text ([samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)).

CHALLENGE #11 • Be thankful

Be thankful. Everyday write down ONE thing you're grateful for - anything. It sounds daft but over time you'll get it. Seeing what's good in our lives, especially during tough times, boosts wellbeing.

CHALLENGE #12 • Be friendly

Be friendly. Start chatting to a neighbour or work colleague you've never spoken to before.



CHECKS AND CHALLENGES...

The hard copy of Man MOT includes a page here to record your WEMWBS scores. You can also record any challenges you set yourself.



HOW'S THE REST OF YOUR HEALTH?

FOOD



Record your diet for week. Make a note of every meal and snack.

The NHS says we should be aiming for five portions of fruit and veg a day. On how many days did you manage this? (A portion is about three heaped tablespoons of veg; an apple or a banana or similar is a portion of fruit.)

But only ONE portion of juice or smoothie a day. Juicing frees the sugar up so it's absorbed into the body just like a spoonful of sugar. Whole fruit is fine.

CHALLENGE #13 • Find a new vegetable

Try some veg that you think you don't like. Better still, find a vegetarian or vegan meal that you like and introduce it to your diet.

Bonus points if you can actually cook them!

DRINK



Record your alcohol intake for a month. The NHS recommends that men drink no more than 14 units a week including a few days off. How many units did you drink a week? How many days off? Did you have any binge drinking sessions? (There's no hard definition of a binge but it's about eight units of alcohol for men or six units for women in one session.)

CHALLENGE #14 • Find a soft drink

Find a soft drink you like (preferably something low-sugar). And order it in the pub. Making your first drink a soft one (or water) will help cut alcohol. It'll quench your thirst and rehydrate you too.



SMOKING



We all know smoking is bad for your health. It damages every organ in the body.

The damage is caused by the tar in burning tobacco but it's the nicotine that's also in tobacco which keeps you addicted. Nicotine replacements whether in the form of vaping, gum or anything else can help you beat cigarettes and avoid that dangerous tar but they do feed your nicotine addiction. That doesn't mean they can't help - just make sure you don't start smoking again.

How many cigarettes do you smoke a day?

CHALLENGE #15 • Quit smoking

Make a list of reasons you want to stop - aim for 20 reasons.

Add up how much you'd save in a year if you stopped smoking - what will you buy with it? (A 20/day habit currently costs over £3700 a year.)

Get together with a mate and talk about how you can support each other to quit. Draw up a contract you both sign. For more support, the NHS offers stop smoking services including locally-based services. Speak to your GP or pharmacist.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Record how much physical activity and exercise you take for a

month. Keep note of informal stuff like walking to work, cycling to the

shops or doing housework as well as the obvious stuff like gym visits, jogging or five-a-side.

You might want to mark if the exercise is gentle or aerobic. Aerobic exercise makes you a little breathless and raises the heart rate.

The NHS recommend two and a half hours (150 minutes) of **moderate intensity aerobic exercise** a week. By moderate intensity they mean that you are not so breathless you can't talk but you may struggle to sing.





CHALLENGE #16 • Replace a car journey

Replace one regular car journey with a bike ride or walk.

Better still, also get an app or pedometer that counts your daily steps (aim for 10,000). Perhaps try the NHS Active 10 walking app.

If you're exercising so hard that you struggle to speak, they call this **vigorous intensity aerobic exercise**. The NHS reckon that 75 minutes (an hour and 15 minutes) of this is equal to 150 minutes of moderate activity.

This is just a guide. Don't get too hung up on the numbers or whether it's gentle, moderate or vigorous. Gentle is good - you won't get injured. Walking everyday will be better for you in the long-run than a gym membership that you don't use or an injury.

CHALLENGE #17 • Use the stairs

If you use a lift at work or home, try to use the stairs instead.

Build exercise into your day. There's increasing evidence for so-called 'exercise-snacking'. In other words, three ten minute walks can be just as effective as one half-hour session.

Simply choose a thing or things that you like and that fits in with your life. If you're doing a lot of gentle exercise, you can make some of it more aerobic by, for example, walking or cycling faster or for longer.

You should also try to include strengthening, stretching and balancing activities.



CHALLENGE #18 • Build it into your day

Find one enjoyable physical activity you could build into your day.

No giggling at the back, we're thinking about walking, gardening, housework, playing games but whatever you fancy is good.



CHALLENGE #19 • Take a lunch-break

Always **take your lunch break** (and perhaps use it to go for a walk).

CHALLENGE #20 • Stand up more

Sitting down all day damages health. **Stand up more**. For example:

- > walk and talk (on the phone or try walking meetings)
 - > stand up on public transport (and get off a couple of stops early too)
 - > walk to a co-workers desk instead of messaging
 - > try a standing desk or work bench.
-

CHALLENGE #21 • Dance

Dance - around the house by yourself or with a partner or friend. Play your favourite tune and don't stop moving

CHALLENGE #22 • Exercise with others

Combine exercise with your social life by joining a gym, club or team. Increasingly, there are sports opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. (But make sure you're fit enough to avoid injury.)

CHALLENGE #23 • Boost your walking pace

Without flying around not noticing anyone or anything, **increase your regular walking pace**. There is evidence it prolongs life.

CHALLENGE #24 • Get into the green

Get out into the green in a park, on a common or in the countryside. As well as your daily dose of Vitamin D (which a lot of us don't have enough of), it also helps boost mood and energy levels.

Try to take a particular interest in something you find there - plants, trees, birds, butterflies, berries. How many different types do you see? It's amazing how much is out there if we are just open to seeing it.

CHECKS AND CHALLENGES...



The hard copy of Man MOT includes a page here to record more checks and challenges.



WHAT NEXT?

YOUR HEALTH PRIORITIES

Create your own 1, 2, 3 pyramid:

- > **ONE key fact you'll take away**
(It could be about health in general - that one man in five dies before the age of 65, for example - or it could be about yourself from the checks and challenges - I've learned my blood pressure is too high or I like a regular routine.)
- > **TWOgether** - two things you'd like to do with others (taken from your challenges lists)
- > **THREE actions you're going to do yourself** (again from the challenges)



1

2

3



Keep these six points in mind as you start keeping an eye on your own health. If you feel you're losing interest or can't keep up with your plans, work through the booklet again and change your goals. Anything is better than nothing and every little helps. Good luck.

CHALLENGE #25 • Take it further

The most important thing is to keep doing what you've started while reading this booklet. There are also many ways you can take it forward:

- > **Have a look at the Forum's other manuals.** Our range of booklets covers general health as well as specific topics like diet, diabetes, alcohol and stress. You can see them all at:
shop.menshealthforum.org.uk/collections/man-manuals
- > **Check out the Forum's men's health training.** Online at:
shop.menshealthforum.org.uk/collections/training-for-men.
- > **Make a bigger, second pyramid.** Look at all the challenges you've listed at various points in this booklet and prioritise all of them in a second pyramid. At the top put the one thing you'll do if you do nothing else. (It will probably be something from your first pyramid.) Then a row of two, a row of three and so on. You'll now have a really good overview of what matters to you when it comes to your health and in what order.
- > **Pick a month.** Social movements like Dry January, veganuary or Stoptober can help you reduce alcohol, eat less meat or quit smoking.
- > **Be age (and stage) aware.** Some health problems are more likely at certain times or situations in our lives: prostate over the age of 45; mental health, perhaps, when a relationship ends; sexually-transmitted diseases if not using a condom and so on. Be aware of how your health needs (and the checks and challenges that will help) change with time.

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MAN MOT

Bright,
clear, fun and
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- > how healthy are you?
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It helps you answer these questions using simple measures and CHECKS. Then it CHALLENGES you: how will you get healthier?

There are places throughout the booklet for you to record where you are right now and to keep an eye on the changes over time.

A healthier life need not be a big deal. With the Men's Health Forum's MAN MOT, it's easy and it's fun.

WARNING:

Reading this booklet could seriously improve your health.

Special PDF version for Adobe.

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MEN'S HEALTH MADE EASY