



Malaysian Men's Life Expectancy Plummets To 70.8 Years. We Gotta Do Something!

We're three months into 2023, and you may or may not be well on your way to your goals for the year. For most men, being healthy often means hitting the gym and getting into a specific shape – and while exercise is important, what men often overlook is their overall health and wellbeing.

In a recent statement, the **Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM)** said that the life expectancy for men in Malaysia has dropped to 70.8 years. This could partially be due to the fact that men generally shy away from seeking medical care and don't prioritise preventive health check ups.

Though this lower life expectancy for men is alarming, this news isn't all doom and gloom – rather, it should be a wake-up call for men in Malaysia to put greater emphasis on their health. While going to the doctor can trigger anxiety or seem intimidating, a shift in mindset can help. Rather than seeking out a doctor as a last resort or when things are clearly wrong, setting up regular health screenings in the same way you regularly schedule car maintenance can go a long way – as can knowing what to look out for through regular health screenings.

To help you get started, we've put together a quick list of some of the biggest issues faced by Malaysian men, and the preventive measures that can be taken.

Hair Loss & Balding

If you're worried about all the hair fall that you've seen in the shower lately, know you're not alone!

Globally, male balding affects approximately 50% of men by the age of 50 and can start as early as your 20s. This can affect men's self esteem as well as their quality of life. While genetics play a huge part, factors such as stress, iron deficiency, and malnutrition also contribute to all that hair loss.

If you're looking for ways to keep the hair fall at bay, living a healthier life, physically and mentally, can really help hold off early onset balding. Making sure to incorporate exercise into your everyday routine, getting enough sleep, and nourishing your body with the right vitamins and minerals is a good place to start – vitamin D, E, C and Zinc are especially helpful for hair growth.

If you're already doing this but are not seeing results, don't worry – help is still available! There are treatments for male balding, including topical hair treatments with medications like finasteride and minoxidil that have been proven effective for most men. Hisential, Malaysia's first men's health clinic, has also introduced a rejuvenating hair gel to help with hair loss. Book a consultation to speak with an expert about your hair loss and health – from there, they can prescribe the right treatment and medications based on your individual needs. For those who are a little more adventurous, hair transplant procedures may also be an option to consider.

Heart disease continues to be one of the leading causes of death amongst men in Malaysia – and while we all know that nutrition and cardio are key to maintaining good heart health, it's also important to remember to do regular check-ups so you know where you stand.

Here are the major factors doctors look at when it comes to heart health:

Blood Pressure: Starting at age 18, you should be checking your blood pressure at least once every two years to screen for high blood pressure, as this is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Cholesterol levels: You should start your cholesterol screenings from the age of 20, especially if you have other risk factors, such as a family history of heart disease. If you haven't already, then make it a point to do this once every two to four years at least.

Type 2 diabetes: Not many people realise this, but diabetes patients are also likely to have conditions that risk heart disease. If you have risk factors for diabetes, such as being overweight or having a family history of diabetes, your health care provider may recommend an early screening. If not, screening is recommended at least every three years beginning at age 45.

Gut Health

Often overlooked by men, gut health is key to managing a host of other illnesses. For those who might be wondering where your gut starts and ends, this area of your body is also known as your digestive tract, and consists of most of your major organs including your stomach, liver, pancreas and colon.

Since it includes so many major organs, your gut influences many bodily functions. This means that a dysfunctional digestive tract could cause a variety of health issues from allergies to autoimmune diseases.

The gut microbiome also produces mood-enhancing chemicals, such as dopamine, and serotonin, So it's important to make sure there is balance in the force (also known as the good and bad bacteria in your gut). If you're looking for ways to improve your gut health, then you need to eat more foods that are high in fibre, consume less processed sugar, limit foods that are high in saturated fat and sodium, and stay hydrated. You can undergo microbiome testing to get a better understanding of your digestive system and have your doctors provide tailored probiotic supplements.

Remember this: optimal gut health means optimal body and mind functionality.

Sexual Health

Something that's not often talked about openly is men's sexual health – but we're here to break that taboo.

Globally, about 40% of men aged 40 and above have experienced some form of erectile dysfunction (ED) or other sexual-related concerns including premature ejaculation, delayed ejaculation, or the inability to experience an orgasm upon ejaculation. For anyone struggling with these issues, it's important to know that you're not alone, and that help is available.

Firstly, you need to understand the causes. Erectile dysfunction for example, can be caused by a variety of factors, including diabetes, heart disease and obesity. While this is commonly known, most people don't realise that ED can be a psychological problem as well. Feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and stress can really take a toll on your mental health, which in turn reflects on your physical and sexual performance as well.

If this is something you're struggling with, make sure to find ways to destress and, most importantly, be honest with your partner. Reducing anxiety and any uneasiness in a relationship can be both a good boost to your self-esteem thus helping you to overcome some of the mental roadblocks you might be experiencing.

If this doesn't work for you, there are also various medical treatments available – clinics such as Hisential will offer a variety of treatments depending on your needs, including oral medications or Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT). While these treatments can sound intimidating, they are non-invasive and your healthcare practitioner will ensure that you are comfortable throughout.

Important tip: If you're seeking treatment for ED, always make sure that you go to clinics and centres that are licensed by the Ministry of Health Malaysia. Always remember, it's best to speak to a Men's Health physician and get investigated to find out the actual cause of your ED.

Mental Health

While mental health is no longer the taboo it once was, it is still one of the biggest health concerns for men. Studies have shown that while women in Malaysia report higher levels of depression and anxiety, Malaysian men are three times more likely to die by suicide. Additionally, men are less likely to open up to their loved ones or even seek professional help when they are struggling mentally. To combat this, we need to change the narratives of how we as men speak to ourselves and each other.

Firstly, we need to acknowledge how damaging these stereotypes that encourage repressing emotions can be and avoid reinforcing them. Simple steps such as refraining from telling someone to "man up" or "stop being a girl" when expressing their emotions are important to change the narrative that men shouldn't ask for help.

Instead, we need to support our male friends and family when they do speak up and validate how they feel so that they feel comfortable sharing what they are going through. We also recommend taking mental health days off work every now and then to do what you like – it can also help to spend some time in nature. There are many resources for mental health in Malaysia so don't be afraid to seek professional help if needed.

The number one skin care tip that all men need to remember is to use sunscreen! With our scorching Malaysian weather, being exposed to UV rays without protection can be harmful to your skin over long periods of time. If nothing else will convince you, remember that George Clooney once shared that he never leaves his house without SPF!

Now that we've given you the ultimate top-to-toe guide to help you get started on your healthcare journey, it's up to you to put these steps into practice in order to be the healthiest version of yourself.

<https://hype.my/2023/320316/malaysian-mens-life-expectancy-plummets-to-70-8-years-we-gotta-do-something/>