

HEALTH LITERACY IS BEING MALE DANGEROUS TO BOYS' HEALTH?



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iven that prostate cancer is the most common cancer among men and research indicates the majority of men know very little about it, health organizations around the world are urging men to take control. Men do worry about their health, however many do not discuss their concerns until a disease has progressed. Is this due to embarrassment, invincibility, and why discuss prostate health in Mentoring Boys.com newsletter?

Men don't suddenly become embarrassed about their health at age 40, many have been mortified for years. From an early age, males are taught compelling messages about being strong and manly. The Boy Code is a powerful game that all boys are asked to play on their journey to adulthood. From a very young age, boys are taught they shouldn't cry or complain and that they should tough out physical pain and hardship.

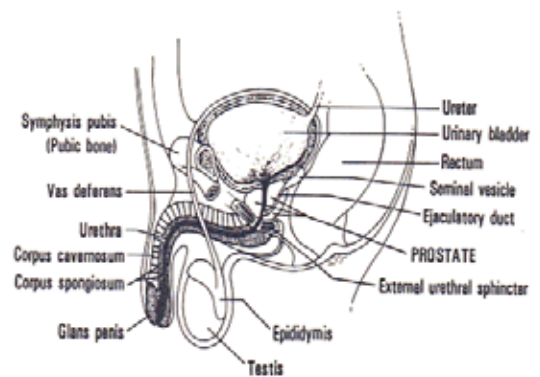
A major male health study – Out of Touch – discovered 25% of men would wait as long as possible before seeing a doctor if they felt sick, were in pain, or worried about their health.

Another study indicated embarrassment prevents over 30% of men under age 25 from seeing their doctor. When young men do visit their doctors, they discovered that 33% of these young men found it difficult to speak to their doctors about medical concerns.

Awkwardness and lack of awareness can contribute to late diagnosis. Testicular cancer is the most common cancer amongst young men despite its 95% cure rate when caught early enough, yet few men even know how to self-examine regularly. The same survey showed that 97 percent of college students were unaware of self-examination, but when they were instructed, 79 percent were doing it regularly six months later.

Medical science has shown that from conception males are more likely to experience a host of health problems that females don't. They're more prone to birth defects, more likely to be stricken by injury or disease, and to die prematurely.

It is critical that boys learn to discuss their health and wellness.



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While more fathers are talking about health issues with their sons, it is still not common. Consider that the average woman asks four questions during a doctor appointment and the average man asks none. One study showed that more than 80% of men over 35 had never discussed health issues as an adolescent with their fathers and this figure remains high -64%-for men under 35.

To avoid embarrassment many males would prefer to search the Internet for health answers and while medical experts are responding to this trend so are a variety of other Internet ventures. Your son may have difficulty separating fact from fiction, not to mention the bombardment of sexual enhancement messages.

From an early age healthcare is perceived to be the domain of women. It is vital that both fathers AND mothers discuss health and wellness with their sons – including stress, anxiety, and depression.

Remember that when boys have the words to describe their body they are more protected from sexual grooming and assault. It is critical that we equip boys with literacy skills to avoid risky situations. Boys need to know what is inappropriate, and how to get help.

Begin with regular and candid discussions about bodily functioning and everyday concerns and in time you'll develop the confidence to discuss more complicated issues with your boy when he is older – such as substance use, contraception and STD's.

If you have attended a Boy Smarts presentation you'll recall that often the best conversations occur in the car, where eye contact is minimal, bilateral and spatial stimulation are activated, and everyone can talk freely. Be bold and courageous – your son will thank you when he becomes a man, and perhaps a father.

In support of Prostate Awareness Week -the following *YouTube* prostate lesson will bring a smile to your face: www.youtube.com/watch?v=us0uKmfGDg

Also, visit <http://tcrc.acor.org/tcexam.html> or <http://www.icr.ac.uk/everyman/testicular/self-examination.html> for medical advice about testicular examination and health.

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