

Men's Health Issues: The College Years

Research consistently shows that college men engage in more unhealthy behaviors and lifestyle patterns than college women. By and large, compared to women they:

- eat more fat and less fiber
- sleep less
- are more likely to be overweight
- are more likely to engage in riskier sports, work, and travel
- are more likely to rely on themselves, withdraw from friends and peers, and to talk themselves out of depression
- are more likely to underestimate the risks associated with dangerous activities
- are less likely to practice self-examinations for testicular cancer than women are to practice self-examinations for breast cancer
- are less likely to disclose pain or injury or seek out necessary help
- have higher blood pressure
- have smaller social networks and less intimate and active social relationships
- engage in riskier sexual practices, such as becoming sexually active earlier, having more sexual partners, not using a condom, and having sex while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
- commit suicide at higher rates

Most men, including those in college, are less knowledgeable about health issues than women.

Changing Mindsets and Behaviors

Help your student start taking more responsibility for his health now. The college years are a perfect time to begin exploring and developing lifelong habits. Taft College (CA) offers the following health checklist for men on their Student Services webpage:

Daily:

- Exercise for at least 20 minutes
- Protect yourself from the sun by using sunscreen and dressing appropriately
- Watch your fat intake
- Eat 2-3 servings of protein, 6-11 servings of grain, 3-5 servings of veggies, and 2-4 servings of fruit
- Be aware of your alcohol intake
- Maintain a healthy level of stress

Monthly:

- Perform a testicular self examination
- Perform a full body examination to look for unusual moles or skin conditions and changes in teeth, gums, or tongue
- Maintain a healthy weight

Yearly:

- Have a dental checkup 1-2 times a year
- Have a blood pressure test conducted at least every 2 years
- Have an eye exam
- Check your blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Get a flu shot

Sources: Taft College's Student Services Webpage at www.taft.cc.ca.us/newtc/student-services/health/men_issues.htm; Body Image and College Men: In Search of the Ideal Male Body by Matthew Herek (RA Manager, February 2005)

Body Image & College Men

Many people don't realize that body image is a concern for some men. In the past several years, more and more male students have acknowledged that they experience difficulties related to their body image.

What is body image dysmorphia (BID)?

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (1994), BID is a preoccupation with an imagined defect in appearance. This preoccupation causes men and women significant distress, resulting in an inability to function successfully on a day to day basis. While women with BID are likely to believe they are "too fat," men with the disorder are likely to believe they are "too thin."

What are some warning signs of BID among men?

- Steroid use to gain muscle in a shorter amount of time
- Excessive weight lifting
- Excessive body checking
- Not spending time with family and friends in order to maintain a regimented workout routine

What is the Adonis Complex?

The Adonis complex covers a large array of male body image issues, ranging from obsessing about a blemish on one's face to a full-blown eating disorder such as bulimia or anorexia. Many look to the media as a major cause of the Adonis Complex.