

## Men's Physical and Sexual Health

The beginning of a new year is often a time when people resolve to forge new habits to improve their physical health. After the frequent indulgence in food and drink over the holidays, the new year is a natural time to return to the basics of fitness. In addition to a myriad of other beneficial effects, this can also create a very positive impact on your sexual life. For men, physical health plays a key role in erectile functioning. Although the positive effects of good health on your intimate life may often be disregarded, they cannot be ignored when dysfunction is present.

For example, smoking cigarettes can play a significant role in a man's ability to get and maintain an erection during sex. As many researchers have shown, smoking impairs the blood flow throughout a man's body, including to his penis. I have been told by various doctors that smoking can increase a man's risk of erectile dysfunction by up to 40% when compared to a man who never smoked. If the vascular health (pertaining to the vessels that carry or circulate fluid, such as blood, in the body) of a man is impaired, then his ability to get and maintain an erection will also be negatively affected.

When a man quits smoking, his heart will be strengthened and his blood flow throughout his entire body (including to his penis) will be bolstered. Therefore, achieving and maintaining an erection will be easier for him. Another advantage of quitting smoking is that the body will produce more nitric oxide, which is a chemical that relaxes arteries so more blood can travel through them. A man's sex life benefits once again since blood flow is the key to erections.

Regular exercise, stable sleep patterns, moderate drinking, and eating nutritious food also help to improve men's sexual health. Exercise helps people to manage stress, feel better about themselves, and think more clearly. It also strengthens the heart and lowers blood pressure. The benefits of exercise, adequate sleep and nutrition are too numerous to mention, but the positive effects that they create in a man's sex life are often ignored. A man's self-esteem, body image and confidence will all influence his ability to experience sexual desire, arousal and orgasm. Rather than being impaired by fear, anxiety or depression, which are often linked to erectile dysfunction, a man will be able to share more of himself with his intimate partner(s) when he is practicing the habits of good health. This is because he will most likely feel more relaxed, open, present, and possibly even more playful or experimental.

Overall, the better a man can feel about his physical body, the more confident he will feel in his sexual life. Certainly, factors such as medications and physical limitations must be taken into account, but a man can still choose to do all he can to optimize his physical health in order to fully enjoy his sex life. If this sounds appealing, an ideal book to further develop men's new year's resolutions is *Men's Sexual Health: Fitness for Satisfying Sex* by Barry McCarthy and Michael Metz. By applying one or more fresh strategies, 2018 could be your most sexually satisfying year yet!