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## Men's health is often women's work

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Doctors called it "the Clinton effect." After former President Bill Clinton's quadruple bypass, men started visiting doctors in droves to request cardiac tests or discuss their symptoms.

As it turned out, Clinton had been ignoring chest pain for several months. He had also stopped taking a drug his doctor prescribed to lower his cholesterol.

Women across America let out a sigh. Why don't men go to doctors or follow medical advice? It's a fact that women - mothers, wives, sisters and daughters - are usually the gatekeepers of health in the family. They are often the ones who make medical appointments for other family members. Women are also quicker to see a doctor when they develop symptoms.

In contrast, men are more likely to ignore symptoms and hope they go away. By the time they see a doctor, symptoms may be severe and harder to manage or treat.

Women live 5.2 years longer on average than men. Could men's avoidance of doctors have anything to do with it? Many experts offer a resounding "yes."

### **Death, taxes and men who avoid doctors**

Certainties in life shouldn't include men neglecting their health. Yet, according to more than 1,000 men taking part in a 2007 survey commissioned by the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP):



If you're a man, you can learn from women that getting recommended screenings and checkups can lead to a longer, healthier life. © iStockphoto.com

- Thirty-six percent said they see a doctor only when "extremely sick."
- Fifty-five percent did not have a routine physical in the last year.
- Almost one in five, age 55 and older, had not been screened for colon cancer.

Men's attitudes about checkups may have come from their own fathers who avoided doctors. Boys may have learned from fathers to hide their pain so as not to appear weak, too.

Men also tend to be less willing than women to discuss their health. Women may talk freely about breast lumps, depression or urinary problems to a friend or a doctor. For men, even talking to a doctor or spouse may be embarrassing if the subject involves their genitals, bowels or mental health. "Don't ask, don't tell" is often their style.

### Real men get checkups

Are you the wife, girlfriend, mother, daughter or friend of a man? If so, your work is cut out for you. Many men will not see a doctor unless prodded by the women in their lives. In the AAFP survey, 80 percent of men with wives or girlfriends said their partner helped convince them to see a doctor.

Like men who won't ask for directions, many men don't think they need a doctor's advice. Men can feel fine, however, but still have high cholesterol, high blood pressure or cancer.

If you're a man, you can learn from women that getting recommended screenings and checkups can lead to a longer, healthier life. Early detection and treatment of cholesterol and blood pressure problems can prevent a heart attack or stroke. Detecting a tumor before it has spread can make the difference in whether or not a cancer is treatable.

If you are a woman with a man in your life, keep nudging your guy to exercise, eat a healthy diet and seek proper medical care according to his age and family history. In this case, a little nagging is a small price to pay for possibly saving his life.

View the original [Men's health is often women's work](#) article on [myOptumHealth.com](http://myOptumHealth.com)

### SOURCES:

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- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Men: stay healthy at any age.
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