

Fit for Farming

A guide to men's health for Yorkshire farmers

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The author and the publisher do not intend this book to be used instead of advice from a medical practitioner, which you should always get for any symptom or illness.

Foreword

So farmers are all healthy? No problems in the countryside – it's just men in cities who pop their clogs early? Not true, but as farmers you have some different challenges to your health. When James Herriot made his lonely rounds on the Yorkshire moors looking after sick farm stock he often commented on the accidents farmers befell on the fells. Too often you can be caught in a vice between your own health needs and the demands of your business. Ultimately though, your health is a productivity issue which you cannot afford to neglect.

Yorkshire has 35,000 farmers and, with their families, they play a vital role in providing the region's excellent food and drink, which is renowned across the world. This publication has been endorsed by farmers, their wives and partners, and many young farmers. Its contents reflect the concerns they raised – in particular, we were very struck by the powerful comments about the causes and effects of stress. We have also included anecdotes which show how a few changes to diet/lifestyle can significantly improve your health and your business – and many are easy and fun!

The farming community has cared for land and livestock for generations and it is fitting that they should look after their own health as well as the acres and animals they care for. We will need a vibrant, creative and energetic Yorkshire farming community as we operate in global markets to feed a growing world population. Good health will be at the centre of success. It is essential that we are 'fit to farm'.

This booklet has been created to address many of the common health concerns which affect the farming community and we are very grateful to Professor Ian Banks, a rural GP himself and all of our colleagues at DH, NHS, YAS, HSE and in the farming community who have contributed to this guide.



Nigel Pulling

Nigel Pulling
Chief Executive

Yorkshire Agricultural Society



Paul Johnstone

Professor Paul Johnstone
Regional Director Public Health –
Yorkshire and Humber

Coping with stress

"There's no end to the paperwork. Every time the postman comes, it's another bloody Ministry form!"



Life without stress is impossible, and a small amount of stress can be good for you, but a build-up of pressure can lead to a dangerous amount of stress. This can damage your health and even affect the people around you.

Most of us have experienced feelings such as being worried, being tense or feeling unable to cope. The good news is that there are things you can do to manage stress, at home and at work, with support from those around you.

See www.malehealth.co.uk/stress

"I know a lot of farmers and the first holiday they had was when they were taken out for foot and mouth."

Stress signals

Although we all have to deal with stress, people vary in how much stress they can deal with before it has an effect on their life. Watch out for common stress signals including:

- Eating more or less than normal
- Mood swings
- Not being able to concentrate
- Feeling tense
- Feeling useless
- Feeling worried or nervous
- Not sleeping properly
- Being tired or forgetful.

Part of the problem is not recognising our own stress signals. Another part is expecting too much of ourselves.

Stress can be particularly bad for farmers because they are often working alone and may not get much chance to socialise.

Why bother?

Stress can trigger anxiety, depression and physical symptoms such as:

- Back pain
- Indigestion
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Psoriasis (scaly skin)
- Migraine
- Tension headaches.

There are several things you can do to help yourself and improve how you feel physically and mentally:

1 Time out

It can be hard to cope when you are feeling very stressed which is why it is important to take time out.

Quick fix

Getting yourself out of a stressful situation, even for a few moments, can give you the space you need to feel ready to tackle the problem.

Long term

Taking time out from your normal routine may help. If you have young children try to organise a babysitter for an evening, or take it in turns with your partner to have time to yourselves. As for work:

- Try to avoid doing excessively long hours (easier said than done at some times of year!)
- Plan (and take!) a proper holiday in a quiet period of the year
- Take breaks away from your work area each day.

2 Chill out

Getting enough sleep will relax your mind and help you cope with stress.

Quick fix

Simple relaxation techniques like breathing deeply can be an effective way of helping you deal with stress.

Long term

Plan relaxation time, even if it's just a long bath or listening to music.

Try to get a good night's sleep. Avoid sleeping tablets as they can be addictive and make things even worse.

3 Leave it out

Avoid smoking, junk food and alcohol! These won't help your stress levels. Go easy on drinks that contain a lot of caffeine or sugar, as caffeine may make you feel anxious and sugar can cause mood swings.

Quick fix

Drink plenty of water. This will help you concentrate and may stop you getting stress headaches.

Long term

Improving your diet will help your body to deal with stress. It's important to make time for proper meals. Talk during meals, as this is a time to relax as well as eat.

4 Talk it out

Just talking about things that are making you stressed may help you see things differently.

Talk to your friends or family

Dealing with stress alone is never a good idea. Talking to even one other person can help you deal with stress, and family or friends may be able help you.

Talk with a health professional

You can speak to a doctor or practice nurse for advice and support, or contact NHS Direct (0845 4647 or www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).

Accidents: just bad luck?

"Back then, you were seen as a wimp if you got covered up when using sheep dips, but that culture has changed now and for the better"

Farm machinery is very unforgiving when you make a mistake. You can always take a rubber to a wrong number on an expense sheet or drill a new hole in a car body. But a chain saw never, ever says sorry.

First the bad news: Farming is probably the UK's most dangerous job. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) around 42 people die from accidents each year on farms.

Now the good news: all of these deaths were preventable.

Farmers make up only 1% of the working population with around 442,000 people, yet farming is responsible for more than 15% of deaths to all workers each year.

Most of the casualties are older, self-employed farmers. Death from machinery mistakes is only part of the story. Thousands of farmers are injured, often seriously, each and every year.

The main causes of death are:

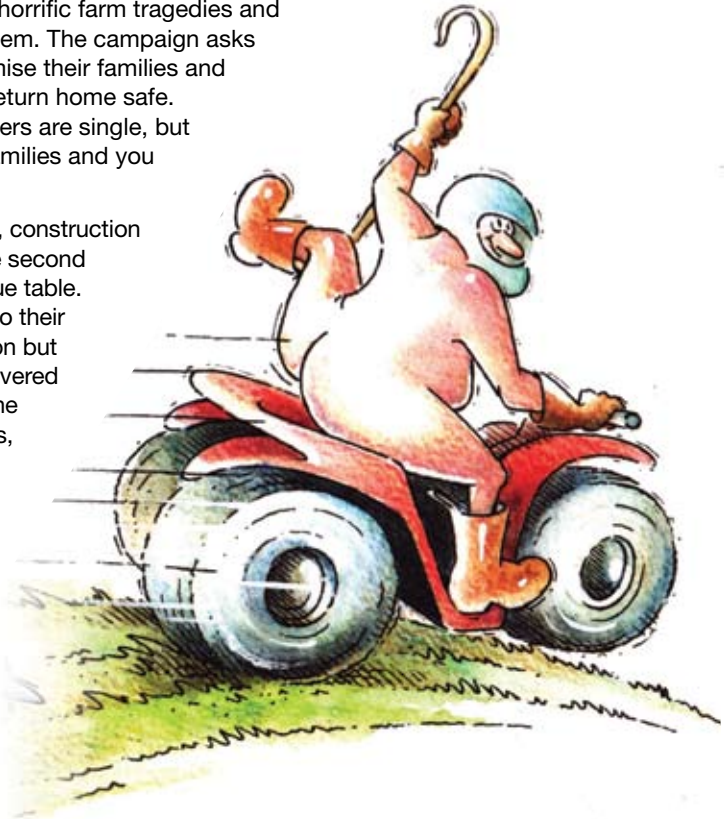
- Accidents with farm machinery (24%)
- Falling from roofs (17%)
- Struck by moving or falling objects (15%).

The statistics and causes of farm deaths have stayed consistent over the past 10 years, so the HSE launched a campaign to raise accident prevention awareness. Watch out for their 'promise packs'



detailing some horrific farm tragedies and how to avoid them. The campaign asks farmers to promise their families and loved ones to return home safe. Yes, many farmers are single, but you still have families and you will be missed.

Not surprisingly, construction industries come second in this sad league table. Many farmers do their own construction but are often not covered by or observe the same strict rules, such as 'no hat, no boots: no job'. Yet it is just as vital, if not more so, to take precautions. Most big company construction workers are surrounded by



people to help when things go wrong. Falling from a half painted barn roof isn't helped when there is no one to catch you or call for help.

Avoiding accidents is not rocket science and most farmers are more aware than anyone else of just how dangerous the farm can be. Accidents are usually a combination of things such as tiredness, pressure from suppliers, old equipment and familiarity with machinery, but none of these are helped by working with alcohol on board.

Stress is a major cause of accidents on the farm and alcohol is often used to deal with it. For the city worker it is possible to take 'time out' but this is not so easy for a self employed farmer. The consequences of stress may be more important for the man still working with a three-point attachment tractor than for the one working with a ballpoint pen. Dealing with modern day farm equipment, along with the pressure from deadlines, government and EU regulations, makes it all the more important to take accident prevention seriously.

You know how to avoid farm accidents better than anyone. It is simply a matter of putting this knowledge first, every time, always.

Weighty matters

Eating a well-balanced diet can seriously improve your health by:

- Keeping your weight down
- Lowering your blood cholesterol
- Preventing high blood pressure.

All of these lower your risk of getting heart disease, which is the single biggest killer, and things like diabetes and cancer.

See www.malehealth.co.uk/diet

Fat facts

You do need some fat because it helps the body soak up some vitamins, it's a great energy boost and it supplies some of the things the body can't make itself. But too much fat means too much weight.

- Look for foods that are lower in fat
- Try not to eat fatty foods too often
- A plate of fried fish and chips won't kill you, but eating high fat foods all the time can seriously damage your health
- Cut down on the fat you use in cooking. You should grill, casserole or stew meat instead of frying it.

Boring? No chance

Eating well doesn't need to be boring. Eating a good variety of food makes sense and can be fun too. Basically you need:

- More fruit and vegetables
- Some starchy foods such as rice, bread, pasta and potatoes
- Less saturated fat, salt and sugar
- Some protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, eggs and pulses.

Salt and increased blood pressure

Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure. People with high blood pressure are three times more likely to develop heart disease or have a stroke than people with normal blood pressure.

Tips to reduce salt

- Eat home-cooked meals rather than ready meals when possible
- Use fresh fish and lean meat, rather than canned, smoked or processed meat
- Go for food with low or reduced sodium levels or no added salt
- Cook rice, pasta and hot cereals without salt
- Use herbs and spices instead of salt when cooking.

Fruit and veg

Unless you have been hiding under a rock for the past few years you will know that eating plenty of fruit and vegetables is good for your health. Aim to eat at least five portions a day.

Heavyweight issues

Did you know that:

- Obese people are 33% more likely to die from cancer than those who are a healthy weight?
- Two out of every five people in the United Kingdom have high blood pressure?
- A person who is 12kg (about two stone) overweight is twice as likely to have a heart attack as someone who is a healthy weight?
- Every year, 30,000 deaths are directly linked to obesity, and every 17.5 minutes a person dies of an obesity-related illness?

Good gut size

Men with a waist size of more than 94 centimetres (37 inches) have increased health risks. A waist measurement of over 102 centimetres (40 inches) can lead to serious health risks.

African-Caribbean and Asian men have an increased risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, and being overweight increases this risk. Being 40 years old is fine, having a 40-inch waist isn't.

How to measure your waist

- Find the top of your hip bone and the bottom of your ribs
- Breathe out naturally
- Place the tape measure between these points and wrap it around your waist
- Make a note of the measurement.



Sensible drinking

"Alcohol has ruined so many lives... and it's something that's swept under the carpet"

Lower risk drinking means no more than three to four units a day for men. If you keep to these amounts, in most circumstances, you should prevent damaging your health.

If you regularly drink more than 35 units a week you might already have experienced problems like feeling tired or depressed, putting on weight, memory loss, sleeping badly and having sexual problems. You could also suffer from high blood pressure. Some people are argumentative if they drink a lot, which can affect their relationships with family and friends.

See www.malehealth.co.uk/drinking



Just how heavy is your drinking?

Large glass of wine (175 millilitres) 15%	3 units	120 to 170 calories
Small glass of wine (125 millilitres) 12%	1½ units	85 to 120 calories
Bottle of wine (750 millilitres) 12%	9 units	255 to 360 calories
Pint of beer 5%	3 units	180 calories
Pint of beer 3.5%	2 units	160 to 170 calories
Single measure of spirits (25 millilitres) 40%	1 unit	60 to 75 calories

For more information go to www.units.nhs.uk or call 0800 917 8282.

Drinking tips

- Walk to the pub to burn off some extra calories on the way
- Drink plenty of water, both during the day and when drinking alcohol
- Try to drink after a meal instead of before – you won't spoil your appetite and you won't feel like drinking so much after your meal
- Try reducing the strength of what you drink. For example, if you normally drink 5% beer, try 3.5% beer instead
- Try to have at least one alcohol-free day a week.



Drugs and Substance Use

There are many different types of drugs, each with their own facts, issues and risks, too many to cover in this guide. For frank, confidential information from friendly people who are professionally trained to give straight up, unbiased information about drugs, ring Frank on 0800 77 66 00, or check out www.talktofrank.com. The lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and offer translation services. Both the helpline and website also give confidential information and support for those worried about a friend or family member.

Smoking

As many as seven out of 10 smokers want to quit. Stopping smoking could be the best thing you'll ever do in your life. It can be a life-changing experience. Stop smoking and look forward to years of better health.

Stopping smoking is the one single thing you can do to massively increase your chances of living longer. Once you've stopped smoking, your body will begin to heal within 20 minutes, repairing the damage done by all those years of smoking.

Facts about smoking

- Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body, causing many diseases and reducing your quality of life and how long you live
- Smoking causes, bronchitis, emphysema, heart disease, lung cancer and cancer in other organs including the lip, mouth, throat, bladder, kidney, stomach and liver
- Breathing in other people's cigarette smoke can also cause these diseases. It is never safe to breathe in other people's smoke. To protect yourself and your family from this you should ban smoking in your home and your car and avoid smoking in public places
- One in two long-term smokers will die early as a result of smoking – half of these in middle age
- Smoking is also linked to erection problems.

Quit plan

Stopping smoking is the one single thing you can do to massively increase your chances of living longer. Once you've stopped smoking, your body will begin to heal within 20 minutes, beginning to repair the damage done by years of smoking.

- After 20 minutes your blood pressure and pulse will return to normal
- After eight hours your blood oxygen levels will return to normal and your risk of having a heart attack will fall
- After 24 hours carbon monoxide will leave your body. Your lungs will start to clear out smoke-related rubbish
- After 48 hours your body will be nicotine-free, and your sense of taste and smell will improve
- After 72 hours you will breathe easier and you will have more energy
- After two to 12 weeks your circulation will improve, and it will be easier for you to walk and exercise
- After three to nine months your breathing will improve. You can say goodbye to coughing, shortness of breath and wheezing
- After five years of not smoking your risk of having a heart attack will have halved.

How to do it

Preparing to stop smoking is about being practical and having a plan. People stop smoking every day, and you can, too.

Contact your local NHS Stop Smoking Service – a free service where trained experts are waiting to help you. You can talk to an adviser or share your experiences as part of a group.

Sign up to the Together Programme by contacting the NHS Smoking Helpline.

Use nicotine-replacement products such as patches, gum and inhalators to cope with your withdrawal symptoms and cravings.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) can be obtained through your GP or bought over the counter in the pharmacy. Used correctly, it can be very successful in easing the cravings for nicotine. There are many types so make sure you discuss with your GP or pharmacist the best one for you.

Where can I get more information?**NHS Direct On-line**

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

The British Lung Foundation

Tel: 08458 50 50 20

www.lunguk.org

Macmillan Cancer Support

Tel: 0808 808 2020

www.macmillan.org.uk

The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation

Helpline: 0800 358 7200

www.roycastle.org

Cancer Research UK

Tel: 0800-226237

www.cancerhelp.org.uk

Cancerbackup

Helpline: 0808 800 1234

www.cancerbackup.org.uk

Men's Health Forum

www.menshealthforum.org.uk

NLH Cancer Specialist Library

www.library.nhs.uk/cancer

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)

www.nice.org.uk

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/choices

Smoking helpline

Tel: 0800 022 4332

www.smokefree.nhs.uk

Mouth matters

Men visit their dentist less often than women. Most things that go wrong in your mouth can be prevented.

Bad teeth (dental decay)

Sugary or starchy foods or drinks feed bacteria which naturally live in the mouth. An unhealthy mix of food, bacteria and saliva called 'plaque' builds up around teeth, attacking the tough enamel on the outside. If left, this will destroy the teeth.

Prevention

Brushing with fluoride toothpaste every night and morning, and avoiding sugary drinks or food, will help prevent bad teeth. Teeth only start to hurt once they are badly damaged, so see your dentist at least every year for a check-up.

Mouth ulcers

These can really be a pain, especially when eating or drinking. You can get rid of most ulcers with some corticosteroid cream or a mouthwash from your pharmacist. See your doctor if there is no improvement after a few days.

Mouth cancer

Men are much more likely than women to develop mouth cancer, usually on the tongue, lips or gums. Watch out for:

- A lump or sore on the lip or in the mouth which doesn't go away within a few weeks
- Lumps or pains in the neck.

Most mouth cancer is caused by smoking (or chewing tobacco) and can be made worse by alcohol. The good news is that it can be cured, but only if caught early, so regular checks with your dentist are a good idea.



Back care

A painful back is one of life's miseries and because other people cannot 'see' the pain it gets little sympathy. More than 90% of people will suffer from back problems at some time in their life and for many it will be a constant cause of discomfort or pain.

There are 33 bones in the spine. Small joints give the spine flexibility without damaging the spinal cord which runs through it and carries messages to and from the brain. Over-stretching or injury to the spine can lead to severe pain and even loss of movement in the limbs.

We take the spine for granted until it reacts to being treated badly. Serious back pain can be caused by bad posture, not lifting things properly or accidental injury, and these can all make problems you may already have even worse.

The back is supported by hundreds of different muscles, including those that also support the arms, legs and head. Most back pain comes from injured muscle or muscle tendons rather than the spine itself. When hurt, muscle can 'spasm' (be unable to relax properly), and this leads to more pain and possibly more damage, so it is important to rest straight away. You should get back to work gently as the injury settles rather than stay too long in bed, as being upright is always better than lying down.

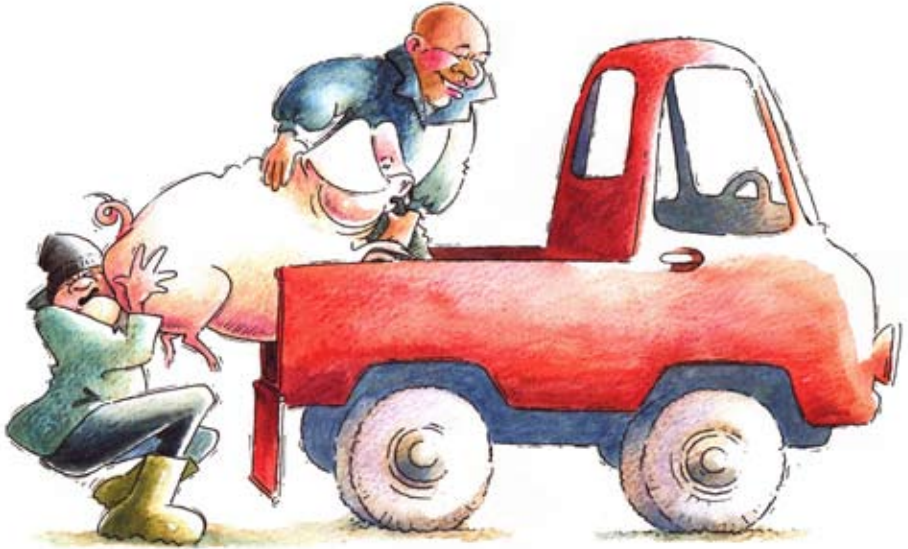
See www.malehealth.co.uk/back

Self-care

To avoid a bad back you need to lift things in the right way, have good posture and look after your bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments. When things go wrong you need to ignore medical myths and follow current advice. A gentle return to full activity is better than weeks of lying in bed with a door under the mattress. Serious back pain may need rest or to be checked by a doctor.

Try to reduce the pressure on the spine when lying down. It can help to lie sideways with your legs slightly bent and with a cushion between them. Tension is part of the problem and a gentle back massage can be really effective. Don't stay in the same position too long – roll over or even stand up and walk for a few steps. A mix of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (for example, ibuprofen) and paracetamol can really help (always follow the instructions on the packet).

Swapping between warm towels and cool compresses can help relax muscles and reduce inflammation. As the pain reduces, try to move around as normal but avoid lifting anything or straining your back.



You should call **NHS Direct (0845 4647)** if you have:

- Serious pain in either or both your legs
- A loss of feeling or power in your legs
- Trouble urinating.

“A farmer will talk about his bad back or his bad knees, but that’s it. He won’t talk about other things that might be bothering him.”

Healthy bones

Bone is an actively growing organ that is constantly adapting to stresses and strains on the body. Regular exercise is very important in keeping bones strong and the spine strong and flexible.

But exercise alone is not enough. You need to eat the right food, but not too much of it: being overweight is a major cause of back problems because it reduces activity and flexibility and also puts added strain on the muscles, ligaments and bones.

Bones need plenty of calcium. The body can only store this mineral in the bone itself, so you need fresh calcium every day. The best way to get calcium is from dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt, bread and the bones you can eat from fish such as sardines. Green leafy vegetables provide vitamins and calcium and help to protect you from heart disease and cancer.

Wear and tear can most hit the hips and knees, as they take most of the strain. The good news is that even when they wear out we can get a replacement. Don't expect a perfect branded part, but they will do more than a half decent job to keep you active. Talk to your doctor.

Sunshine vitamins

It's not enough just to eat plenty of calcium, as the body needs vitamin D to help take it in from the stomach. Sunlight converts an inactive form of vitamin D into the type which does this. You need a healthy balance between too much sun (which can cause skin cancer) and too little (which can cause bones to become thinner).



Erectile Dysfunction (ED, Impotence)



At least one in 10 British men have had some sort of erection problems at some stage in their lives and around one man in 20 has permanent erection problems. This is not helped by most men not wanting to talk about these problems, despite the fact that virtually all of them can be sorted out with simple treatments.

It is very important to find out what is causing the problem as it may be linked to diabetes or high blood pressure.

At one time, what a man was thinking about was considered the major factor for erection problems. We now know that around one-third of all cases will be due to psychological issues and can often respond well to non-clinical treatments such as sex counselling. Normally, if you have erections at any time other than during attempted intercourse you have a psychological rather than physical problem. Getting an erection during television programmes, sexy videos or self-masturbation is a good sign, although it is not a 100% test.

See www.malehealth.co.uk/sexualhealth

Prostate problems

Only men have a prostate gland. It's round and about the size of a golf ball. It is in the pelvis, against the base of the bladder. The prostate surrounds the urethra – the tube that runs from your bladder inside your penis to the outside (you urinate through it). Imagine the prostate as a fat rubber washer around a bit of tubing. It grows to adult size during puberty. In most men it also begins to grow again in early middle age, which can cause problems which are quite common.

There are two possible causes of an enlarged prostate: benign prostate hyperplasia (BPH) – a benign (non-cancerous) enlargement of the prostate gland common in men over 50 – and prostate cancer. The symptoms are very similar and are usually related to problems urinating, such as the following.

- A constant need to urinate, especially at night
- Rushing to the toilet
- Difficulty starting to urinate
- Difficulty urinating
- Taking a long time urinating
- Having a weak flow of urine
- Feeling that your bladder has not emptied properly
- Dribbling after you've finished urinating
- Pain or discomfort when urinating.

Other symptoms can include the following:

- Lower back pain
- Pain in your pelvis, hips or thighs
- Erection problems
- Blood in the urine – this is rare
- Pain when you ejaculate
- Pain in your penis or testicles.

It is important that you know that any of these symptoms can also be caused by problems which are nothing to do with prostate cancer. If you are concerned about any symptoms that you have, visit your doctor.

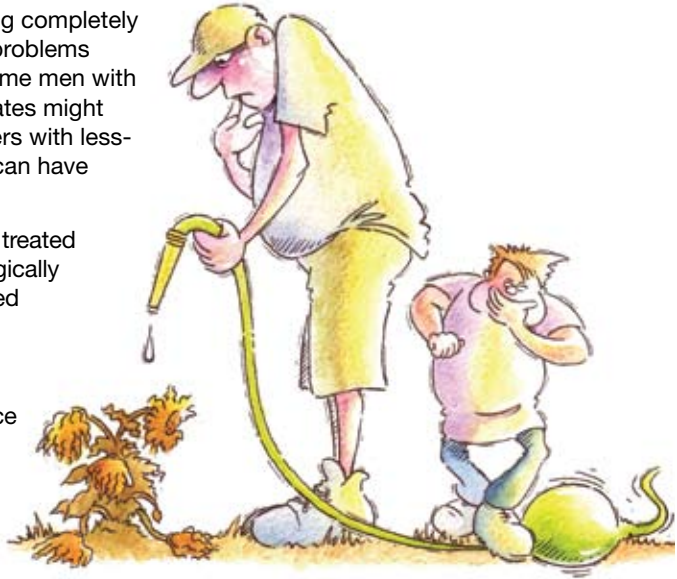
Enlarged prostate (BPH)

BPH rarely causes symptoms before the age of 40, but more than half of men in their sixties and as many as 90% in their seventies and eighties have some symptoms of BPH.

As the prostate enlarges, tissue layers surrounding it prevents it from growing evenly, and pressure then squashes the urethra like a clamp on a garden hose. As a result, the bladder wall becomes thicker and irritated, shrinking even when it contains small amounts of urine, causing you to urinate more often. The bladder will eventually weaken and lose the ability to empty itself, trapping urine inside. The

urethra becoming narrower and the bladder not emptying completely cause many of the problems linked with BPH. Some men with very enlarged prostates might not suffer while others with less-enlarged prostates can have more problems.

The problem can be treated with drugs or by surgically removing the enlarged part of the prostate. There is a small risk that either treatment may cause impotence (being unable to get and keep an erection). You can speak to your doctor about this.



Prostate cancer

Older men of African or Caribbean origin are at high risk of getting prostate cancer. Men who have had a close male blood relative, especially a brother, with prostate cancer also seem to have an increased risk of getting it.

The Western diet of highly refined food with a high animal fat content also seems to increase the risk of developing prostate cancer. There is no firm evidence of how to reduce the risk of prostate cancer. We do know that having a healthy diet with more fruit and vegetables, less red meat and more fish is good for reducing the risks of other cancers, heart disease and possibly prostate cancer.

It is important to be clear – not all men get symptoms that show they have prostate cancer. In the men that do, not all men have exactly the same symptoms. You do not have to have all the symptoms listed to have prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer is treated in several different ways, which can depend on how aggressive the cancer is, whether it has spread elsewhere in your body and how old you are. Your general state of health may also make a difference.

You can speak to your doctor about your options.

You may be able to reduce your risk with the occasional Bloody Mary, preferably with more tomato juice than vodka. Tomatoes are said to protect you.

Bowel cancer

What is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer is a disease of the large bowel (colon) or rectum. It is also sometimes called colorectal or colon cancer.

- It is the second largest cause of cancer deaths in the UK
- In 2006 there were over 30,000 new cases of bowel cancer in England and over 14,000 deaths
- Around one in 20 people will get bowel cancer at some point in their life.

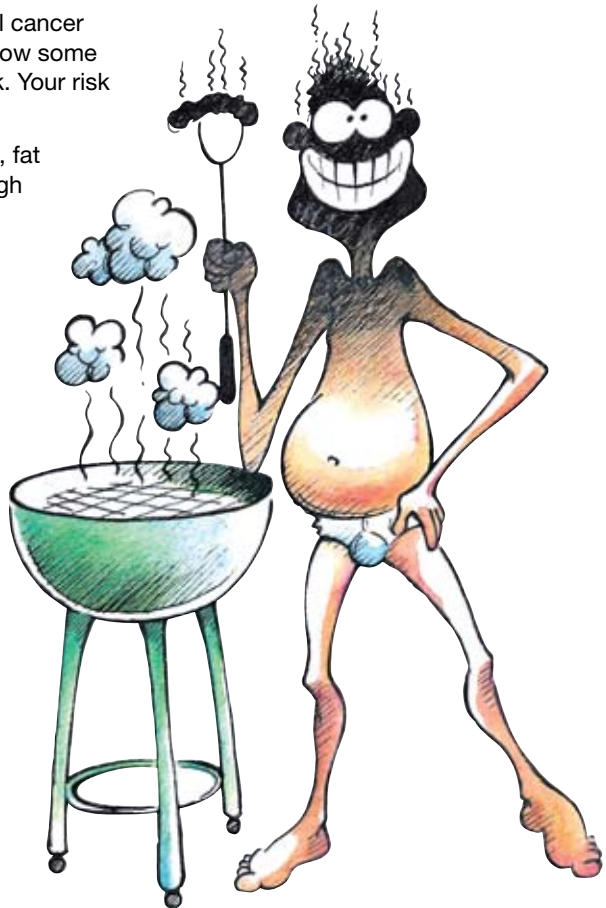
Causes of bowel cancer

The definite cause of bowel cancer is still a mystery. But we know some things do increase your risk. Your risk is higher if:

- You eat lots of junk food, fat and sugar and not enough fibre
- You eat lots of burnt food
- Someone in your close family had bowel cancer
- You don't exercise
- You're overweight
- You smoke tobacco.

The good news is you can reduce your risk, even if bowel cancer is in the family.

- Reduce fats and sugars in your diet and eat more fruit, vegetables and fibre
- Keep your weight under control
- Discuss your family history with your doctor
- Quit smoking.



Better sooner than later

Being ‘bowel aware’ is the name of the game. Guts play up at the best of times but there are some warning signs that you shouldn’t ignore. Symptoms that might be bowel cancer include:

- A *persistent* change in normal bowel habit, such as going more often and diarrhoea, especially if you are also bleeding from your bottom
- Bleeding from the bottom without any reason
- A lump in your tummy or back passage felt by your doctor
- Pain that affects your appetite
- Unexplained iron deficiency
- Unexplained weight loss
- Unexplained extreme tiredness.

If you have any of these symptoms for four weeks you should go and see your GP, but please remember that most of these symptoms will not be cancer.

The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme

Since 2009, men and women aged 60 to 75 are sent a testing kit to complete at home. The kit is then sent off to a laboratory. It detects hidden blood in the stools, which could mean bowel cancer. 2 out of 100 people who take the test have a positive result, and are invited to go for a bowel scope (colonoscopy) at a local screening unit. Research has shown that screening can cut the death rate from bowel cancer by 16% in those screened.

Getting it sorted

If you do have bowel cancer, treatment will depend on where the cancer is, whether it has spread and your general health. Surgery is the main form of treatment, but more doctors are combining it with chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Where can I get further information?

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk

Cancer Research UK

Tel: 0800 226237

www.cancerhelp.org.uk

Beating Bowel Cancer

Email: info@beatingbowelcancer.org

www.beatingbowelcancer.org

Bowel Cancer UK

Helpline: 08708 50 60 50

www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk

Cancerbackup

Helpline: 0808 800 1234

www.cancerbacup.org.uk

Men’s Health Forum

www.malehealth.co.uk

NHS Cancer Screening Programmes

www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk

NHS Direct

Tel: 0845 4647

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Skin cancer

"We need to understand that sun cream is not just for when you are on holiday."

The sun damages your skin by its ultraviolet radiation (UV). (Tanning is a sign that damaged skin is trying to protect itself from the sun's ultraviolet rays.) As you might expect, farmers suffer skin cancer more than people with indoor jobs.

There are basically two types of skin cancer. Non-melanoma is the most common form. Watch out for:

- A new growth or sore that does not heal within four weeks
- A spot or sore that continues to itch, hurt, crust, scab or bleed
- Constant skin ulcers that are not explained by other causes.

These are commonly found on the forehead and on the tip of the chin, nose or ears; i.e. the exposed bits.

Malignant melanoma is the more serious form of skin cancer. Although it is much less common, it is on the increase. It most often appears as a changing mole or freckle. Watch out for:

- Size: bigger than the butt end of a pencil (more than 6mm/quarter inch diameter)
- Colour variety: shades of tan, brown or black and sometimes red, blue or white
- Shape: ragged or scalloped edge and one half unlike the other
- Itchiness
- Bleeding
- Look at your moles and watch out for changes in them.

Many skin changes are harmless but a quick check with your doctor or pharmacist can save your skin.

Sun Smart Tips

- If possible, seek shade when the sun is strong
- Wear a t-shirt and long shorts made from closely woven fabric
- Slap on a hat. A big hat (that covers ears, neck and nose!)
- Slop on sunscreen with SPF 15+ every 2 hours
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.

Sunscreens and smokescreens

People get confused over sunscreens and can damage their skin by choosing the wrong sunscreen for them or not using enough.

Read your sunscreen label and make sure it has both an SPF and a star rating. The SPF or Sun Protection Factor tells you how much protection you are getting from UVB rays.



The star *** rating shows the level of protection against UVA rays. Try to buy a sunscreen that is at least SPF 15+ and has a 4 star rating.

Remember! Sunscreen offers some protection, but use it with cover-up clothing.

Not a lot of people know this

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the UK and not just in women
- Your lifetime risk as a man of developing skin cancer is one in eight
- Even cloudy days can deliver 90% of the dangerous UV rays
- Some football shirts are so thin they let almost all the sunshine through
- Skin damage builds up under the skin just like rust under bodywork paint and can come back to haunt you in later years
- Virtually all the risk comes from the sun... so cover up and close up!

Testicular cancer

Testicular problems are quite rare, and testicular cancer is the most serious. It represents only 1% of all cancers in men, but it is the single biggest cause of cancer-related death in men aged between 18 and 35.

Symptoms of testicular cancer

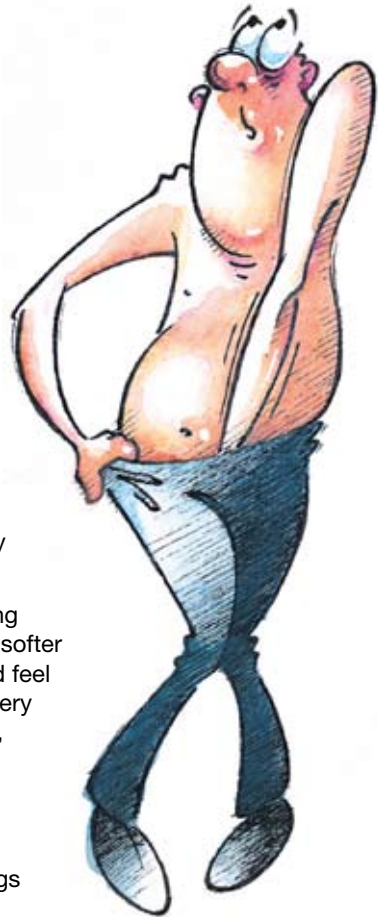
- A lump on one testicle
- Pain and tenderness in either testicle
- Discharge (pus or smelly goo) from the penis
- Blood in the sperm when you ejaculate
- A build-up of fluid inside the testicular sac (scrotum)
- A heavy dragging feeling in the groin or scrotum
- An increase in the size of a testicle
- An enlargement of the breasts, with or without tenderness.

Preventing testicular cancer

For once, men are positively encouraged to check themselves, but this time to do more than just 'check they're still there'. Self-examination is the name of the game. Check your testicles every month in the following ways.

- Do it lying in a warm bath or while having a long shower, as this makes the skin of the scrotum softer
- Hold the scrotum in the palm of your hand and feel the difference between the testicles. You will very probably feel that one is larger and lying lower, which is completely normal
- Examine each one in turn, and then compare them with each other. Use both hands and gently roll each testicle between your thumb and forefinger. Check for any lumps or swellings as they should both be smooth. Remember that the duct carrying sperm to the penis, the epididymis, normally feels bumpy. It lies along the top and back of the testis

Checking your testicles too often can actually make it more difficult to notice any difference and may cause unnecessary worry.



Infections from animals and insects

"Farmers know what the risks are now... 30 years ago, we didn't know what the risks were from these things"

Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis)

Leptospirosis is a serious disease which affects rats, pigs, cattle, dogs and humans. We can become infected through contact with infected urine, water or milk. The disease organisms penetrate broken skin or mucous membranes (e.g. the mouth). Often there are no visible symptoms in infected animals. The most serious form of the disease is spread by rats.

In humans flu-like symptoms may occur, but in most cases symptoms are more severe and can include jaundice (yellow skin and eyes, brown urine), kidney disease, meningitis, skin rashes and changes to other internal organs.

What to do

- If there are rats around, set traps or put down poison
- Cover up cuts and abrasions and always wash well before eating or handling food
- If you visit the doctor with flu symptoms, ask about Leptospirosis. Blood tests are available and Leptospirosis can be treated using antibiotics. It is better to seek advice early rather than wait until irreversible harm has taken place.

Ticks

Ticks feed by perching in low vegetation and waiting (questing) for a susceptible host on which they can attach and feed.

Ticks can carry Lyme disease. Early symptoms may include fever, headache, fatigue, depression, and a circular skin rash.

Personal strategies include avoiding grassy areas with shrubs that attract ticks, wearing white or light-coloured clothing so that attached ticks can be seen easily and removed, tucking trouser legs into socks and walking in the centre of paths to avoid vegetation on which ticks lie in wait of a host.

Removal

If a tick is found on the skin, it should be removed by gently gripping it as close to



the skin as possible, preferably using fine toothed tweezers, and pulling steadily away from the skin. Do not use a lighted cigarette end, a match head or volatile oils to force the tick out. Some veterinary surgeries and pet supply shops sell inexpensive tick removal devices, which may be useful for people who are frequently exposed to ticks.

Insect stings

You cannot always avoid getting stung, but in rare cases there can be a serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. Any difficulty with breathing after a sting needs urgent medical attention.

Toxoplasmosis

A pregnant woman should avoid lambing ewes because of the risk of infection to both herself and her baby.

- Animals that have aborted and the aborted products are especially dangerous to pregnant women
- During the first three months of pregnancy the foetus is less susceptible to the disease, but if infection does occur, abortion or stillbirth may result
- If the infection occurs later in the pregnancy the baby may be born with serious health problems. Milder forms of damage may only become apparent in later life.

Listeriosis

Listeria bacteria are present in the dung of infected sheep. They survive in the soil and can grow at low temperatures. The source of human infection is unclear but is probably contaminated food and milk. The bacteria can continue to grow in partially refrigerated food. Silage may also be contaminated.

Listeriosis is generally only a danger to pregnant women, who should avoid sheep, especially at lambing time.

Orf

This is a virus condition usually caught from sheep or goats. It may occasionally be acquired from cattle or even from dogs that have been fed unskinned carcasses. The animals have painful blisters and scabs around the mouth, nostrils and ears. It is usually transmitted to the farmer when working with the animal. After a period of three to six days a single red painful lump appears on the hand or forearm. This goes on to form a blister and may become infected with other common bacteria and develops an abscess or a spreading red painful area.

The Orf itself is a virus and therefore will eventually disappear of its own accord. The doctor will treat any secondary infections. Once infected, lifelong immunity will follow.

What to do

- Wear gloves when handling infected animals
- Do not scrape off the scabs

- Do not use veterinary foot spray on human wounds and blisters. This can cause a severe reaction.
- Keep blisters clean and covered to avoid cross-infection.

Farmers' Lung

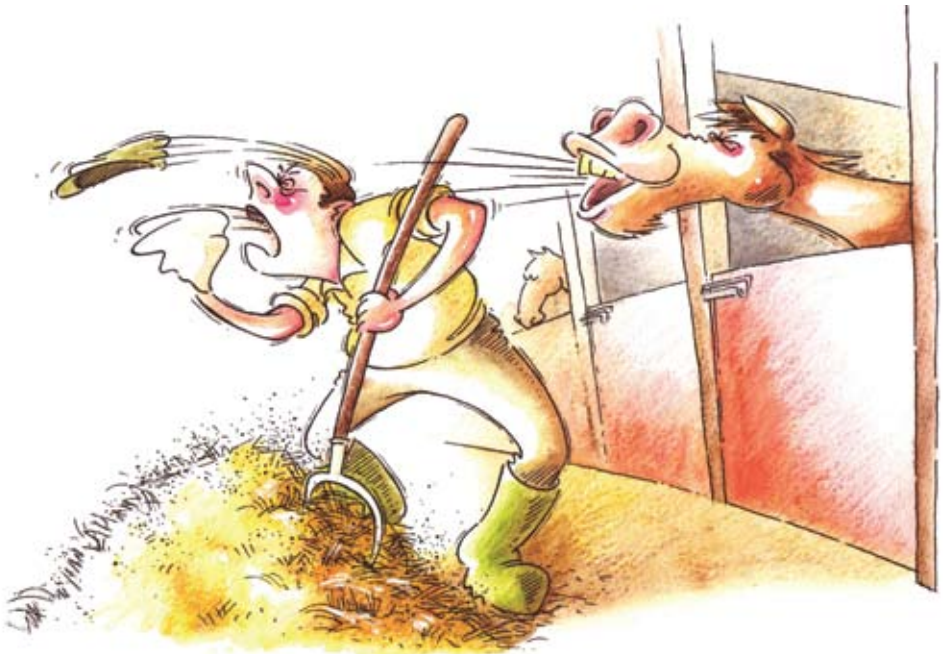
Farmers' Lung is caused by inhaling mould spores. These spores are so tiny that they are easily absorbed and work their way into the smallest lung cells as you breathe.

Symptoms include a dry cough, flu-like aches and pains and eventually shortness of breath. These symptoms are not unusual in winter but if they persist you should visit your doctor. Make sure you tell your GP if you have been exposed to dusty forage.

If you ignore the problem then you run the risk of further contamination which can lead to chronic chest trouble and the development of scar tissue. This causes irreversible damage and permanent shortness of breath.

Prevention is the key:

- Avoid using mouldy hay, straw or grain. If you have to, then disturb it as little as possible
- Always wear a mask. This can make all the difference
- Keep dust exposure to a minimum by keeping barn doors open when working with hay and straw
- Keep your back to the draught to lessen chances of inhalation.



Asbestosis

Asbestosis is a serious, long-term lung disease caused by inhaling asbestos dust and can take 20 years or more to develop – so ill-effects are not instantly traceable to asbestos.

There are three main types – often called white, brown and blue asbestos. The use of blue and brown asbestos (the two most dangerous forms) is totally banned by law. Rural buildings still have large amounts of this natural mineral, which was so attractive because of its fire-retardant properties and easy working.

At least 3,500 people in Great Britain die each year from mesothelioma and asbestos-related lung cancer as a result of past exposure to asbestos.

The main symptoms of asbestosis are:

- Increasing breathlessness
- Coughing
- Chest pain.
- A feeling of tightness in the chest.

Prevention

- Wear the correct protective gear and don't take contaminant home
- Use a shower after working.

Tetanus

The bacteria enter the body through cuts in the skin. You are more at risk of developing tetanus if the wound is deep or if it gets dirty with soil or manure, but even small wounds, such as a prick from a thorn, can allow enough bacteria to get in.

The bacteria release a toxin (poison) which then causes tetanus, although the illness can take 21 days to develop. Tetanus affects your nerves and can be fatal.

Tetanus is quite rare because many people are vaccinated against it. This vaccine enables your body to create antibodies which protect you from the illness if you were to become infected with the bacteria.

Preventing tetanus

The only way to prevent tetanus is to be immunised. A full course of tetanus immunisation consists of five doses of vaccine.

All children are routinely offered immunisation. As an adult, if you are not sure whether or not you have been fully immunised, see your GP or practice nurse. They will be able to advise you about having a 'catch up' injection.

Getting the best from the NHS

"If you have the cows to milk or the corn to harvest, you say, 'oh, I'll see how I'm feeling next week!'"

Don't get caught in the web

Buying drugs from illegal internet sites is potentially very dangerous. Almost all such drugs are at best fake and useless, at worst harmful. You may also have your credit card details stolen as well. More important is the danger of not getting a medical diagnosis. Erection problems won't kill you but linked diabetes or high blood pressure most certainly can. You should speak your doctor or chemist about this first.

More than ever before, the NHS has a range of services that offer convenient options that allow you to get the right treatment at the right time, and at the right place. These services can make life a lot easier so visit

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or phone 0845 4647.

Pharmacists: more than just blue bottles

Pharmacists are highly-qualified professionals providing advice on the use and selection of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. They can give advice on how to manage small problems and common conditions. This includes lifestyle advice about eating habits, exercise and stopping smoking, but they will also tell you where you can get further advice.

NHS Walk-in Centres: a step in the right direction

Highly qualified NHS nurses offer a range of convenient and free services, with no need to make an appointment. They also offer good advice, look after minor illnesses and injuries, provide prescriptions and even provide emergency contraception. Look out for the centres in railway stations, shopping centres or on the high street. They normally open from 7am until 10pm, Monday to Friday, and 9am to 10pm, Saturday and Sunday.

NHS Direct: direct and to the point

NHS Direct provides 24-hour confidential health advice and information. Phone 0845 4647 or visit NHS Direct Online at **www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk**. Why not try NHS Direct Interactive on digital satellite TV?

Doctors' surgeries

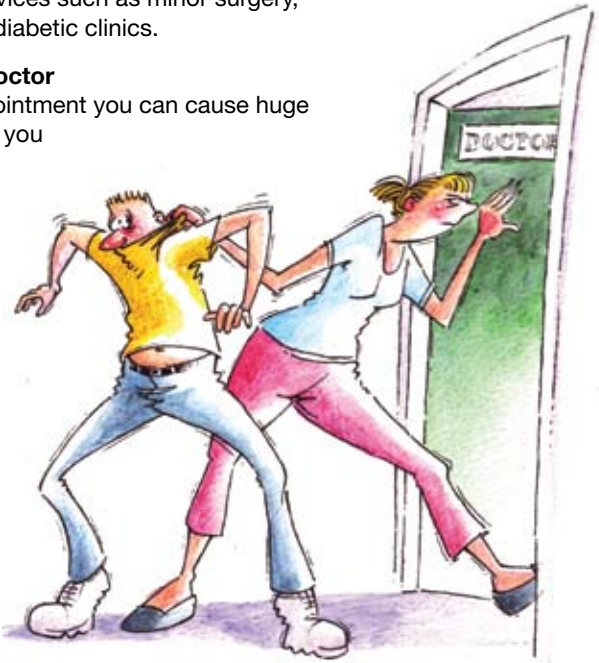
Doctors are often available from around 8.30am to 6pm (or later). Calling at other times will put you in touch with an out-of-hours system. It's always best to see your own doctor if possible, so unless your problem is urgent and cannot wait, you should make an appointment to be seen by your normal doctor. Practices now

often offer a huge range of services such as minor surgery, skincare, chiropody and even diabetic clinics.

Getting the best from your doctor

If you don't turn up for an appointment you can cause huge frustration, especially because you haven't had any medical attention. You should:

- Write down your symptoms before you see your doctor. It's extremely easy to forget the most important things during the examination. Doctors will spot important clues about a problem by asking questions such as: When did the problem start and how did it feel? Did anyone else suffer as well? Has this ever happened before? What have you done about it so far? Are you taking any medicine for it?
- Ask questions, and don't be afraid to ask your doctor to give more information or make something clear that you don't understand. Asking them to write it down for you is a good idea
- Get to the point – if you have a lump or bump say so. Time is limited so there is a real danger of you coming out with a prescription for a sore nose when you might need a serious problem sorted
- Have your prescription explained, and ask whether you can buy any medicines from your chemist. Make sure you know what each medicine is for. Some medicines clash badly with alcohol.



Dentists

You will have to pay for dental check-ups and treatment unless you are at school, are pregnant or receive certain benefits. To find an NHS dentist in your area, go to www.nhs.uk.

Accident and emergency

Accident and emergency departments treat serious accidents or life-threatening illnesses such as heart attacks or medical conditions which suddenly become worse. They are open 24 hours a day all year, and are often used by people who should really see their own doctor or a pharmacist. You should be prepared to wait if there are people more seriously ill than you.