2021 Aflac Men's Health Issues Survey

2021 FINDINGS

The pandemic’s impact on men’s health issues

In the past 12 months, 45% of men did not visit a family doctor or general practitioner for an annual check-up or wellness visit. Other missed medical visits include:

- **84%**: A family doctor or general practitioner for a specific injury (e.g., broken bone, sprain, etc.).
- **74%**: A family doctor or general practitioner for a specific ailment or illness (e.g., heart disease, prostate, etc.).
- **60%**: A family doctor or general practitioner for preventative care (e.g., vaccines, screenings, etc.).
- **60%**: A doctor for a routine eye exam.
- **54%**: A dentist for a routine dental exam.

High health care costs inhibiting men from obtaining medical care

In the past 12 months, almost **half of men (45%)** have postponed or avoided medical treatment in some form due to costs, including:

- **21%**: Recommended health screenings/follow-up treatment suggested by a doctor.
- **17%**: Filling a prescription medication after going to see a doctor for a health issue.
- **16%**: Going to see a doctor for signs or symptoms of a serious illness or injury.
- **14%**: Going to see a doctor for a serious health concern.
- **13%**: Going to see a doctor for an injury.

However, many men avoid sharing health concerns, with **2 in 5 (43%)** reporting that they have argued with someone – family or friends – over going to the doctor. More specifically, **30%** of men said they argue with a life partner over whether they should go to the doctor, and about **23%** argue with other family members or friends about going to the doctor.

Additionally, **42%** have withheld information from family or friends to avoid an argument over going to the doctor, particularly with female family members.

Men’s motivators for seeking care

- Nearly half (44%) of men admit they are most persuaded by their life partner, including wife/girlfriend or husband/boyfriend, to visit the doctor. Women, in particular, have the strongest pull, with over half (56%) of men reporting their wife, girlfriend or mother most persuades them to go to the doctor. Unfortunately, more than one-third (35%) report no one influences them.

- A full **10%** of men said they would be motivated to see a doctor if they directly received a cash benefit as part of an insurance claim, while **11%** of men said they would be motivated to see a doctor to remain sexually active.

- Only about **10%** of men say they lead a somewhat or very unhealthy lifestyle, with the remaining **90%** saying they live a very or somewhat healthy lifestyle.

- Urgent health needs (29%), yearly checkups (28%) and concerns over family health history (18%) are the top-three motivators for men to visit their doctor.
More education and conversations about men’s health are needed

Only one-third (34%) of surveyed men agree they feel well informed of the various illnesses and ailments that commonly affect men — leaving two-thirds that don’t.

A staggering 58% of respondents said they agree with negative statements about their health care, including:

- 22% Easier to go to a walk-in urgent care facility or emergency clinic instead of my primary care physician.
- 21% Experience fear and/or anxiety when going to the doctor.
- 18% Most ailments will heal themselves.
- 13% I’m too busy with work to see the doctor.
- 13% Concern over medical costs keep me up at night.
- 6% Going to the doctor makes me feel less masculine.

Younger men need more attention than older men

More than 1 in 4 (29%) men ages 18-34 experience fear or anxiety when they go to the doctor versus 18% of their parents’ generation ages 50 and older.

Additionally, 1 in 5 men (20%) ages 18-34 said they would be more likely to keep up with annual check-ups if they were more aware of illnesses and ailments that affect men, and 16% of that same age group indicated they wished they could talk with other men (extended family members or friends) about their health-related issues.

Yet, when men see a doctor, issues still persist

More than one-third of men (37%) say they have a strong relationship with their primary care physician, nearly one-third (32%) say they prepare a list of questions or concerns to raise when visiting the doctor, and 65% of men say they are transparent about their lifestyle habits and health concerns with their doctors.

However, negative behaviors still exist:

- 14% of men admit they are not completely honest with their doctor about their lifestyle habits such as alcohol consumption, smoking or exercise.
- The same percentage of men (14%) confessed they feel uneasy or nervous when speaking with their doctor about family history of diseases and health conditions.
- 12% of men admit they hold back information for fear of being lectured.

These numbers are higher among men aged 18-34:

- About one-quarter (24%) are uneasy or nervous because of family history.
- 18% are not honest and/or hold back information for fear of being lectured by their doctor.
- For men age 50 and older, the percentage drops down to 10% for each of the above.