

## **Charlie Wilson, encouraging men to “man up” against prostate cancer.**

*By Men's Health Network*  
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Grammy nominee Charlie Wilson is a familiar voice in R&B music. He was the former lead singer of the GAP band and is currently on his third Jive Records solo album called *Just Charlie*, which came out December 7, 2010. He also takes his talent to Iraq and Kuwait for the troops. February 18 - March 2 will mark his third trip to those regions to perform for the United States troops.

Wilson, who performs his chart topping R&B music for millions of fans, now does his share of “informing” as well... informing men about prostate cancer. Wilson himself was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2008, early enough in the stages to start a successful treatment. He credits beating the disease to his wife, who encouraged him to go see a doctor for a Prostate Specific Antigen test (PSA).

African American men have the highest rate of prostate cancer and are twice as likely to die from it.



Photo credit: Nabil Elderkin

Wilson, spoke to Men's Health Network about his experience with prostate cancer.

### **Q: How did you find out you had prostate cancer?**

A: Men, especially African American men, don't want to go to a doctor to get poked around, but my wife insisted I go. My PSA results worried the doctor. Month after month I returned and each test had resulted in substantially higher numbers than the last. The doctor said the cancer was aggressive and I needed to make a decision about treatment. I thought everything I knew about love, music and my career was out the door, but my wife encouraged me to fight, and I did.

### **Q: After your battle with prostate cancer, what things do you do to live a healthy lifestyle?**

A: I cut out a lot of meats and sugar from my diet. I eat fish, veggies, and fruits. I get a lot of rest too. When I'm on the road I sleep during the day to make sure I'm rested.

### **Q: Are you a big believer in prevention and early detection of diseases like prostate cancer?**

A: I do a lot of performing, and now I want to do my share of informing. All men gotta do is get a check-up. At one show in Atlanta I spoke about my battle with prostate cancer and prevention. After that show, men came running up to me saying they went to get tested because of my story, found out they had prostate cancer, and how without my words, they wouldn't have known.

### **Q: What message do you have for African American men about prostate cancer and men's health issues?**

A: Man up! Prostate cancer doesn't care how old you are. I knew a 27 year old guy who died of prostate cancer. Doctors tell you not to worry about it until you're 40 years old or later, but I think men should get tested at any age. African American men need to go see their doctors, maintain a healthy diet, and live happy.

**Q: How critical is men's health? How important is it to the health of the entire family?**

A: The man is the head of the family. He needs to be able to talk about these things because they affect the whole family. Society is different today; my grandfather would definitely not have discussed this topic with women present. The man is the breadwinner, but the woman is the backbone. Women should encourage their men to take care of themselves. If she can get a mammogram and go through that pain, then a man can handle this physical exam!

**Q: If you could speak to guys around the country and give them words of encouragement, what would you say?**

A: Go get a check up, don't die of shame! I watched my 91 year old father die of prostate cancer, and it put me through a lot of pain. It's no joke. He never got tested, and one day when he went to a doctor they found it. They removed what they could but it came back years later and took his life. He lived a long life, but most men don't get that chance.

Men's Health Network applauds Charlie Wilson's resilience and efforts to help educate men on the importance of health and family. For more information on MHN, go to [www.menshealthnetwork.org](http://www.menshealthnetwork.org).