

The Stages of a Man's Healthcare Needs

"Routine Screening" needs based upon age

1. Ages Twenty to Thirty Five

These are the years for you to get your "baseline" data lined up. What is your cholesterol pattern? Are you smoking? Is your drinking out of your control? Where are you going in terms of exercise and weight control? What's your blood pressure? Depending on the answers to these questions, you may need to see the doctor every 3 to 5 years, or you may need to be seen annually. Men are at risk of testicular cancer until about age 30, so you need to be taught how to check yourself for that on a regular basis. I know you *think* you're fine, but you wouldn't know it if you weren't, so you need to be checked.

2. Ages Thirty Five to Fifty

The focus drills down on what wasn't looking so good previously. You may have thought you could "handle it without medicine," but if that isn't working you're subjecting yourself to organ damage if you don't take medicine. I know you didn't lose the weight or address the drinking or smoking, but this is the fork in the road. Pay me now or pay me later. Sometime after age 46 the word prostate enters your vocabulary. Sports injuries happen more easily and take longer to heal. How long *can* you play basketball? Where are you going with *the rest of your life*?

3. The Big Five-Oh

The party's over; it's time to get to work. Either you deal with it now or it will shorten your life. Get serious. This is the time to start screening for colon cancer, which means either sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy every 5 years, depending on whether you have a family history of colon cancer or pre-cancerous polyps. Cholesterol needs to be down, whether by diet and exercise or by medicine. Electrocardiograms and blood tests for diabetes need to be done regularly. Screening for anemia, prostate cancer, blood in the stool or the urine and hypertension should all be done annually. Glaucoma testing should be done every other year. Of course, whatever health problems have been diagnosed prior to this time need to be cared for regularly as well. It's time to face the guy in the mirror; maybe he's a bully in your life, or maybe he's a man with inner sadness, he won't disappear. You need to find ways to come to terms with him.

4. Now for the good news....

The good news is that there is no major crash that occurs after age 65. Your health needs are exactly the same as they were at 50. It's just more of the same until you're 80. All you have to do is keep your eyes on that prize. Enjoy yourself!