

# 8 habits to steal from guys

We reveal their smartest moves—so you can improve *your* health! BY HOLLY PEVZNER

We all know that women are the healthier sex. We see the doc more often. We live longer. So why would we care what *guys* are up to when it comes to staying fit? It turns out that between watching football and playing Xbox games, they're actually doing some sage things. Research shows that men have an easier time losing weight and finding happiness than women do, thanks to key lifestyle differences. We share eight habits that are worth adding to *your* health arsenal.

## 1 EAT A REAL MEAL

Do you virtuously order the green salad while the guys in your office scarf down burgers and hoagies? When it comes to weight loss, they may be making a better choice. "Many women eat too little at breakfast and lunch," says Dawn Jackson Blatner, R.D., author of *The Flexitarian Diet*. "And without enough calories and the right combination of protein, carbs, and fat in a meal, your blood sugar levels fluctuate." That can leave you feeling hungry, which increases your chances of staging a mid-afternoon vending machine raid or overeating at night.

🔗 **HOW TO MAN UP** In the morning, swap your usual bowl of cornflakes for an egg-and-cheese sandwich or oatmeal topped with nuts or fruit. Then, to stay full until dinner, bulk up your midday meal too: "Pair your soup with half a turkey sandwich," suggests Blatner. "Or top your salad with a serving of lean protein, such as chicken or beans, and fat, like avocado or nuts." Front-loading your calories like this may feel like overeating, but research has found that it actually helps you take in fewer calories overall.

## 2 BE A STRAIGHT SHOOTER

Men yell at each other and no one cries. They get in an argument, then grab beers. "It's socially acceptable for men to express anger, but we're taught it's not ladylike," says Sally Stabb, Ph.D., a psychologist at Texas Woman's University. "Most women don't want to rock the boat."

That might be fine—if capping your emotions wasn't so bad for you. When researchers at Boston University tracked women for a decade, they found that those who suppressed their feelings, like anger, during fights were four times more likely to die earlier from diseases like heart disease than those who spoke up.

🔗 **HOW TO MAN UP** "Communicate with the person who made you angry," says Bree

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Maresca-Kramer, a mental health counselor in Palm City, Florida. "You can do it tactfully; there's no need to yell to get your point across." Instead, say what you think, listen to the other person, and request a specific and concrete change.

Of course, not everything that makes you mad can be tackled instantly. That's when Maresca-Kramer recommends sweating it out. "I often see men release their anger physically—say by running, lifting weights, or kickboxing," she says. "They understand that you have to express those emotions one way or another." Take a page

from their playbook and power through a group cycling class next time you feel like blowing your top. Then revisit the issue with a fresh perspective.

### 3 GRAB A BREWSKI

When we say "beer," do you say "belly"? Surprise! "If you're watching your weight, beer is a good thing to order at happy hour," says David Grotto, R.D., author of *101 Optimal Life Foods*. Ounce for ounce, regular beer has about half the calories (12 per ounce) of wine and liquor. "And because it's carbonated, people usually drink beer more slowly," he says. "The bubbles fill you up."

What's more, beer is heart-healthy. "It contains cholesterol-lowering polyphenols," says Grotto. According to a study from the University of California at Davis, beer is also a top source of dietary silicon, a bone-building mineral. **HOW TO MAN UP** Next time you're perched on a bar stool, order a light brew—in a bottle. "That way, you know you're getting exactly 12 ounces," says Blatner. "With draft beer, wine, or mixed drinks, you never know how many calories you're consuming." It's also smart to let your drink sit before you swig. Research reveals that people drink ice-cold beer faster than cool brews. And chugging it can lead to another round before you realize you've had enough.

### 4 GET OFF THE BENCH

Break out the shin guards or a baseball glove! Although guys usually join sports leagues as a way to hang out with their buddies, they also score an intense workout. In fact, a Dutch study found that **people who played soccer for two to three hours a week improved their bone density and heart health** more than those who ran for the same amount of time, thanks to all the sprinting and kicking. "Plus, being on a team teaches communication skills that



Suit up! Playing baseball burns 350 calories an hour

translate to all aspects of your life," says Bill Cole, founder and president of the International Mental Game Coaching Association.

**HOW TO MAN UP** Rally your friends to form a team, or find a league near you by contacting your local YMCA or community recreation center. Network to find teammates at [meetup.com](http://meetup.com).

### 5 GO BIG OR GO HOME

Whether they're demanding a raise or scaling a mountain, men tend to push the envelope more than women do. "To some extent, men are hardwired to take physical risks," says Frank Farley, Ph.D., a psychologist at Temple University. "That may be partly due to higher testosterone levels, which promote aggressive behavior." Unfortunately, women aren't as likely to stick their neck out, which can be a disadvantage in life. "When you force yourself to take chances, you strengthen your ability to handle change," says Farley.

**HOW TO MAN UP** You don't have to take on any *Jackass*-style challenges, but go ahead and book that scuba diving or mountain climbing vacation. If you want to



Ounce for ounce, beer contains **HALF THE CALORIES** of wine and liquor





These veggies may help boost your libido

scale Yosemite's Half Dome, for instance, begin by signing up for lessons on an indoor rock wall. Then schedule a tougher outdoor climb immediately afterward to flex your newfound skills—and confidence.

## 6 BE A SHOW-OFF

There's a reason men don't buy sarongs. Recent research shows that while they are typically pleased with or indifferent to what they see in the mirror, **eight out of 10 women are dissatisfied with their reflection.** "If you don't like your body, it can rob you of confidence," says Amy Flowers, Ph.D., a psychologist in Macon, Georgia. "It also raises

your risk for depression and anxiety."

♦ **HOW TO MAN UP** While men may naturally place less emphasis on their looks, there's a healthy way to improve your self-image: Hit the gym.

According to a recent study from the University of Florida, the act of exercising—even if you don't drop pounds—can change your perspective for the better. "It helps you be proud of what your body can

accomplish," says study co-author Heather Hausenblas, Ph.D. "Plus, working out improves your mood, which trickles down to all the other aspects of your life, including your relationships."

## 7 LEAVE IT ALONE

If your husband's eyes glaze over when you start detailing your most recent friend drama, try to understand: "Men don't dwell on things like women do," says Maresca-Kramer. The difference may be, in part, biological: **Women tend to rely on the right, or emotional, side of their brain, while men tend to be governed by their left, or analytical, side.** The problem is that obsessing about an issue for too long can lead to anxiety and depression.

♦ **HOW TO MAN UP** Make a list. "Instead of focusing on how you feel, jot down a few actionable ways you can fix the problem," says Barbara

Rubel, a stress and bereavement specialist in Kendall Park, New Jersey. "Having potential answers to your dilemma helps you gain control of a situation." But this doesn't mean you shouldn't vent to your friends a little—simply choose a confidante who you know will support you and encourage you to take action in a constructive way.

## 8 SHOW YOURSELF SOME LOVE

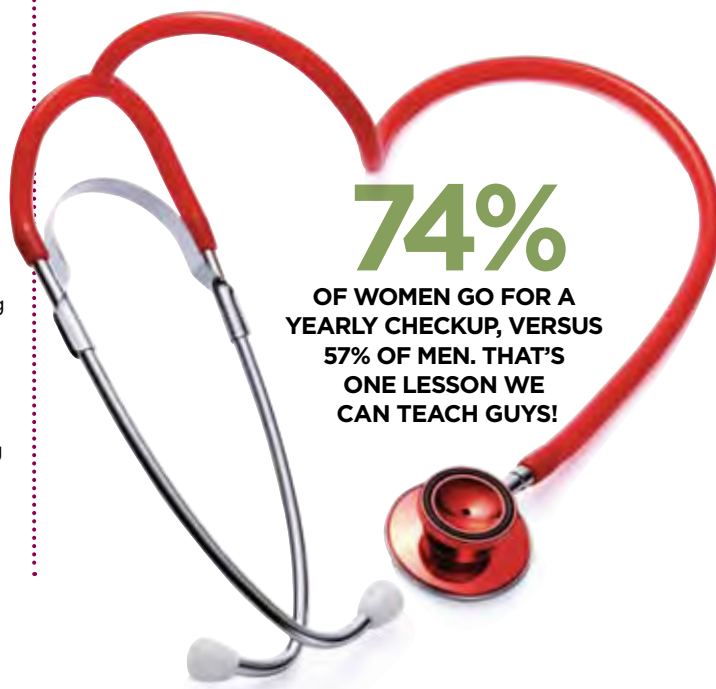
This probably doesn't come as a surprise, but about 60 percent of men masturbate regularly, compared to just 40 percent of women. If you aren't carving out a little "me" time, you may be missing out on some serious mental and physical benefits.

"**Orgasms release feel-good hormones,** including endorphins and oxytocin," says Hilda Hutcherson, M.D., a clinical professor of obstetrics and

gynecology at Columbia University. "That increases relaxation, improves sleep quality, and decreases anxiety." They can also help ease a throbbing head: Researchers at Rutgers University found that women who climax during masturbation increase their pain tolerance immediately afterward by 75 percent.

♦ **HOW TO MAN UP** Linger a little longer in bed in the morning, hit the hay earlier at night, or take an extra-long shower. Then, once you have some solo time, explore. "You just need to start experimenting," says Hutcherson. "It may take a while to get comfortable with your body and figure out what works for you." The best part: All that practice helps you become *more* responsive during sex, which means you'll be enjoying more orgasms, more often.

HOLLY PEVZNER, a New York City-based writer, says the best health tip she got from her husband was to take a nap once in a while.



74%

**OF WOMEN GO FOR A YEARLY CHECKUP, VERSUS 57% OF MEN. THAT'S ONE LESSON WE CAN TEACH GUYS!**