



The symptoms men are most likely to ignore and why they matter

It's common for men to delay seeing a doctor. Tiredness gets blamed on late nights or stressful jobs. Mood changes are written off as pressure. Concerns about sex are kept private. Even physical changes, like a lump in the testicle, may go unchecked out of embarrassment or fear.

This reluctance doesn't make problems go away. In fact, **it can mean missing the chance to treat something early, when it's easier to manage.** The aim of this guide is to highlight common symptoms men downplay, why they matter, and the simple steps that can protect long-term health.

The signs you shouldn't brush off

Some symptoms creep in so slowly they become part of daily life. **Others are dismissed as “nothing serious.”** But paying attention to these changes is important. They can be early signals of health conditions that respond best to early treatment.



Symptom	What it could mean
Persistent fatigue	Sleep apnoea, thyroid imbalance, diabetes, anaemia, depression
Erectile problems	Heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, hormone imbalance, elevated cholesterol, stress or anxiety
Low mood or irritability	Depression (which can look different in men), anxiety, chronic stress, alcohol overuse
Testicular changes	Testicular cancer, infection, injury
Unexplained weight change	Thyroid disorder, digestive issues, diabetes, hormone imbalance, in rare cases cancer

Fatigue that doesn't lift

We all feel worn out from time to time. But persistent fatigue that doesn't improve with rest is different. Many men put this down to overwork, family pressures, or age. While those may play a role, ongoing exhaustion often points to underlying health conditions.

Possible causes include:

- **Sleep apnoea** – interrupted breathing during sleep leaves the body under strain, even after hours in bed.
- **Thyroid problems** – both underactive and overactive thyroids can disturb energy balance.
- **Anaemia** – low iron or vitamin B12 reduces oxygen supply to muscles and brain.
- **Type 2 diabetes** – high or unstable blood sugar affects the body's ability to use fuel effectively.
- **Depression** – low mood often shows up as ongoing tiredness rather than sadness.



Fatigue matters because it disrupts focus, motivation, and relationships. **It can make work feel harder and daily life less enjoyable.** If it lasts more than a few weeks, a check-up is worth arranging. Identifying the cause early often means a simple solution, whether that's treating sleep apnoea, correcting low iron, or supporting mental health.



Erectile issues

Many men feel uncomfortable talking about erection problems. Occasional difficulties are normal, especially during stress or after alcohol. But when it happens often, it should be taken seriously.

There are both physical and psychological causes:

- Reduced blood flow linked to heart disease or high blood pressure.
- Nerve damage from diabetes.
- Low testosterone or other hormonal imbalance.
- Stress, anxiety, or relationship difficulties.
- Side effects of medications such as blood pressure drugs or antidepressants.

Why it matters: erectile issues can be the first sign of cardiovascular disease. The blood vessels in the penis are smaller than those in the heart, so problems often show up there first. It's not just about sexual health, it's about protecting the heart and blood vessels for the future.

Seeking help doesn't just address the physical aspect. It can ease strain on relationships, reduce stress, and improve overall wellbeing. Treatments are effective, and lifestyle changes like exercise, stopping smoking, and moderating alcohol can help too.

Mood and mental health

Low mood, anxiety, and irritability are often overlooked signs of depression in men.

Common features may include irritability, restlessness, or difficulty concentrating.

Sometimes these mask deeper feelings, such as sadness, that may be harder to express.

- Short temper or irritability.
- Pulling away from friends and family.
- Loss of interest in hobbies, sport, or sex.
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions.
- Relying more on alcohol as a coping strategy.



Because these changes creep in, they may be put down to stress or ageing. **But left untreated, depression and anxiety can become overwhelming.** They also increase the risk of physical health issues such as heart disease.

Support can come in many forms: talking therapies, medication, lifestyle shifts like exercise or better sleep, and simply opening up to someone trusted. The most important step is recognising that mood changes are valid health concerns, just like chest pain or a persistent cough.

Testicular changes

Testicular cancer is less common than other cancers, but it mainly affects **younger men often between the ages of 15 and 45**. The outcomes are excellent when it's caught early, yet many men delay seeking help because of embarrassment.

Changes to look out for include:

- A lump or swelling in one testicle.
- A feeling of heaviness or dull ache in the scrotum.
- Persistent pain in a testicle.
- Changes in size, texture, or firmness.

Most lumps are not cancer, but they should always be checked. **Regular self-checks help men notice changes early**. A simple GP visit or ultrasound is usually enough to confirm the cause and, if necessary, begin treatment promptly.





Unexplained weight changes

Weight naturally shifts over time, but unexplained or sudden changes are different.

- **Gradual weight gain around the waist** can point to insulin resistance or type 2 diabetes. It's also linked with higher blood pressure and cardiovascular risk.
- **Unexpected weight loss** without changes in diet or exercise may signal thyroid problems, digestive conditions, or, less commonly, cancer.

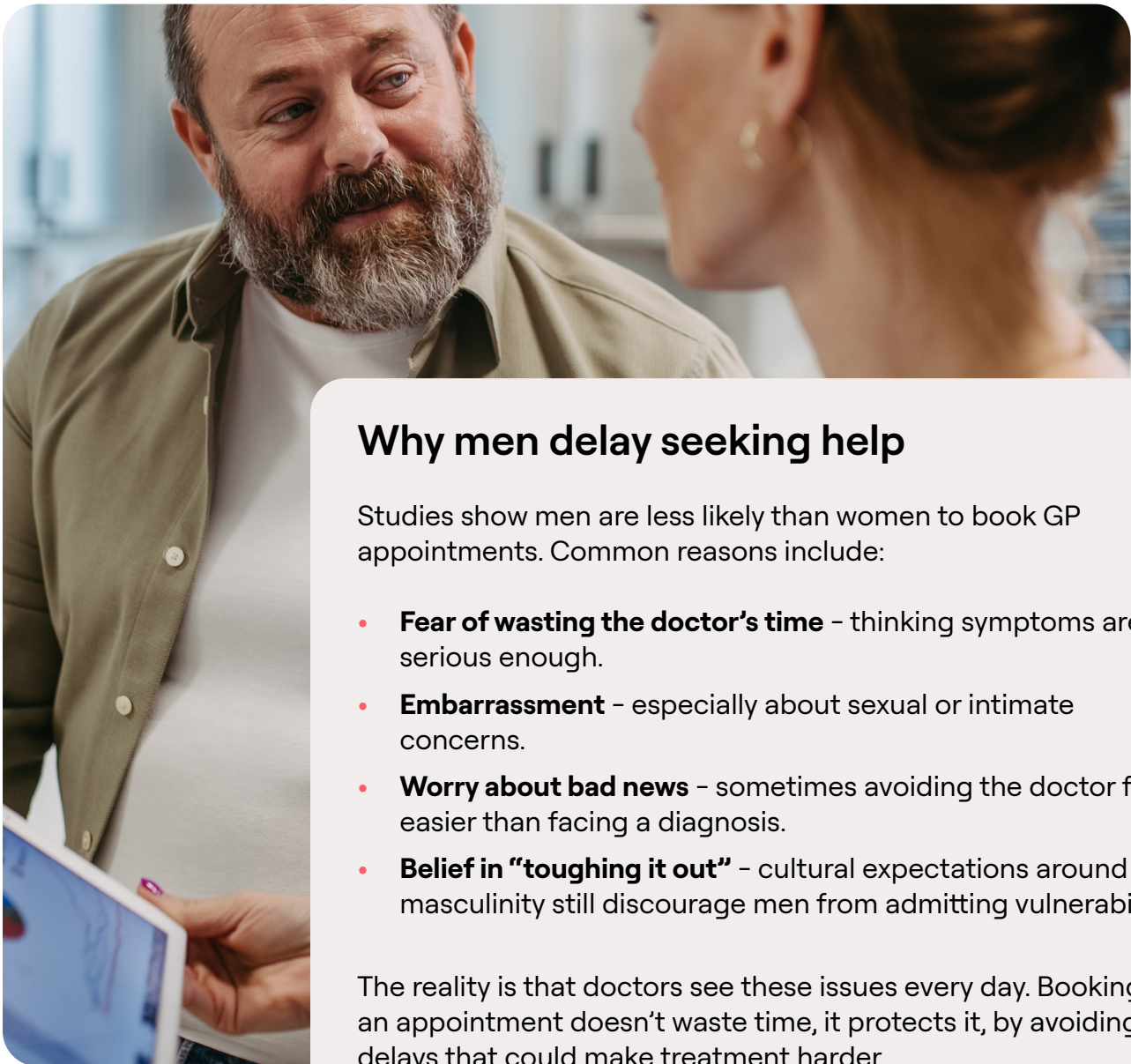
These changes can be subtle at first. That's why it helps to be aware of your usual baseline and check in with a GP if you notice your body changing without a clear reason.

Other symptoms often dismissed

Alongside fatigue, mood, sexual health, and weight, there are other warning signs men commonly ignore:

- **Frequent urination** – especially at night. This can signal diabetes or prostate enlargement.
- **Persistent heartburn** – ongoing reflux may raise the risk of oesophageal cancer if untreated.
- **Skin changes** – new moles or changes in existing ones can be early signs of melanoma.
- **Chest pain** – sometimes mistaken for indigestion but can indicate heart problems.

These symptoms are worth attention precisely because they're easy to brush off. Many are linked to conditions that are far more treatable when diagnosed early.



Why men delay seeking help

Studies show men are less likely than women to book GP appointments. Common reasons include:

- **Fear of wasting the doctor's time** – thinking symptoms aren't serious enough.
- **Embarrassment** – especially about sexual or intimate concerns.
- **Worry about bad news** – sometimes avoiding the doctor feels easier than facing a diagnosis.
- **Belief in "toughing it out"** – cultural expectations around masculinity still discourage men from admitting vulnerability.

The reality is that doctors see these issues every day. Booking an appointment doesn't waste time, it protects it, by avoiding delays that could make treatment harder.

What to do if you notice symptoms

Taking the first step can feel daunting, but it doesn't need to be complicated.

- **Listen to your body** – don't dismiss changes that persist for weeks.
 - **Keep track** – note when symptoms started and how often they occur.
 - **Make small changes** – sleep, exercise, and diet all support recovery and help you feel better day to day.
 - **Share concerns** – whether with a partner, friend, or professional, talking makes action easier.
 - **Book a check-up** – even if symptoms turn out to be minor, the reassurance of a professional opinion is valuable.
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When to seek help urgently

Some situations need immediate medical support. Call for help straight away if you experience:

- Sudden severe chest pain or shortness of breath.
- Vision loss or neurological symptoms like weakness or numbness.
- Suicidal thoughts or feeling unable to stay safe.

These are medical emergencies, and prompt action can save lives.

How HealthHero can help

With **HealthHero**, you can book an online GP consultation quickly and confidentially. A doctor can:

- Assess your symptoms.
- Arrange tests or referrals if needed.
- Explore treatment options.
- Provide reassurance and guidance tailored to your situation.

You don't have to wait weeks for an appointment or manage concerns on your own. Early action helps protect both immediate and long-term health.