

Best line of defence

MEN AND BOYS ARE BEING ENCOURAGED TO TAKE THEIR HEALTH MORE SERIOUSLY

HEALTH

JAMES WIGNEY

Doctors and health advocates are urging younger Australian males to use Men's Health Week as an opportunity to build a relationship with health professionals and get themselves checked out regularly.

The theme of this year's international initiative is Building Healthy Environments for Men and Boys, and Dr Lane Hinchcliffe, founder of the South Australian health service Community GP, says young people in particular will benefit immeasurably from familiarising themselves with the system in the event that they need it.

"The key message for me in Men's Health Week is to empower people to take charge of their health and become aware of their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing," he says. "And if they don't have a health practitioner, to engage with somebody that they feel comfortable with, because that relationship is going to be a really fundamental partnership moving forward if things do arise."

Hinchcliffe says that younger men in particular can feel a sense of invincibility and this – coupled with busy lifestyles and an Australian "she'll be right" mentality – can mean they don't seek medical advice when they should.

Early detection is so important for so many conditions, from mental health issues to cancer, and Hinchcliffe advises vigilance for symptoms and regular check-ups, even when there doesn't appear to be anything wrong.

In addition, changes in sleeping, eating or toilet patterns and mental exhaustion can be markers of something more serious.

"It's about being a little bit cautious and actually saying it's OK to check something out and as a matter of fact, it's important to not just leave it and assume everything's going to be fine," he says.

Hugo Toovey, a 30-year-old army captain and founder of 25 STAY ALIVE, was diagnosed with

testicular cancer at the age of 21, bowel cancer at the age 26 and recently with Crohn's disease.

When he is not working as the Command Welfare Officer at Headquarters Forces Command in Sydney, he spends his time sharing his story and raising awareness.

He is an ambassador for Movember and Gotcha4Life, and he hosts the mental health podcast Behind the Uniform.

"Although it has been a difficult journey, I believe I have been given a unique opportunity to make the best of a bad situation and use what I have gone through to help others," he says.

"If I have learnt anything, it is the importance of early detection. Men especially need to realise that they aren't invincible. Something like cancer and mental illness doesn't discriminate, and I am living proof of that."

Since sharing his story, Toovey realised that there were so many other young people out there who have been affected by cancer and urges young Australians to look out for their health from an earlier age.

"There seems to be so much emphasis on our health when we turn 50, almost as though that's when we should start taking it seriously. But why 50? When I got diagnosed with testicular cancer at only 21, I knew nothing about testicular cancer. Yet testicular cancer is the most common cancer in young men aged 15-34. When I got diagnosed with bowel cancer at 26, I knew nothing about bowel cancer ... yet bowel cancer kills more Australian's aged 25-34 than any other cancer."

Hinchcliffe says sharing experiences like Toovey's is crucial in raising awareness around health in young people, to warn them of potential hazards, but also to let them know they are not alone.

"I think those real stories really help people to relate and that's what we need to focus a lot more on in Health Week, actually telling stories and letting people know that there are cases where things don't always go to plan and then just giving them strategies on how to deal with them."

Want to hear more about Hugo's journey? Join the conversation here: <https://watch.cuppa.tv>



Hugo's 5 messages to help young men stay ALIVE

A - ACT ON SYMPTOMS

- Early detection
- Know your normal
- Common bowel cancer symptoms include bleeding, change in bowel habits for longer than two weeks, abdominal pains, unexplained fatigue and tiredness, unexplained weight loss
- Common testicular cancer symptoms include lump in either testicle, feeling of heaviness in the scrotum

L - LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

- Prevention
- Be healthy and active
- Mental fitness

I - IDENTIFY YOUR RISKS

- Age
- Pre-existing medical conditions
- Family history

V - VISIT YOUR GP

- When did you last see your GP?
- Having annual check-ups should be the norm
- We shouldn't fear going to the doctor

E - EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS

- Self-awareness
- Getting comfortable with the uncomfortable conversations
- There is no shame in seeking help



Hugo Toovey, with his dogs Ernie and Iggy, is a cancer survivor and advocate for men's health. Picture: Adam Yip

How to unleash 'second half' of your life and work

CAREERS

ANTHONY KEANE

Middle-aged Australians are blowing the whistle on half time of their lives and looking for more fulfilling and rewarding careers.

New research by investment giant Colonial First State has found more than one third of Aussies aged 45 to 65 are considering changing careers in the next few years, with many willing to work past the

traditional retirement age of 65. Its modelling found a 50-year-old with \$150,000 in super, on an average \$91,000 wage, would retire with \$360,000 at 65 if they took the traditional path, and their nest egg would deplete to \$253,000 by age 75.

But if they "recharged" their career by retraining for two years, lifting their wage to \$106,000 and working to age 75, their super balance at 75 would be more than \$555,000.

Colonial First State Superannuation's chief executive officer, Kelly Power, says more than

10 per cent of people surveyed are already taking steps towards a new line of work.

"People are beginning to view retirement differently, which could see a huge number of Australians – potentially a million more – working longer and into their 70s," she says.

"We know people want to do more of what makes them really happy, and for some this includes considering a change in career to improve their work-life balance, earn more money or do something they are more passionate about."

Power says people can bring their "second-half" dreams to life by:

- Having a conversation with family and loved ones about life goals.
- Exploring ideas with people they trust or someone who made a similar change.
- Considering getting professional financial advice and making a plan.
- Understanding rules and incentives around the age pension and Seniors and Pensioners Tax Offset.

Power says more people see retirement as an active period with some part-time work and "getting a

financial benefit that will help them live better as they live longer".

Financial strategist Theo Marinis says he is noticing more people considering a new direction, while some who previously retired early are re-entering work part-time as baristas, lawnmowers or other roles.

Marinis says many people have unfulfilled desires. He quotes late John Lennon: "life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans". "All of a sudden, you realise 'when did I turn 55?'," he says. "Let's not die wondering."

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