



"men's reproductive health" = "men's health" because if you don't have the rest of your body in good order, your reproductive organs & systems won't be functioning at their peak. that's bad for you, your partner, and your baby (if you're into that sort of thing). "vitality instead of Viagra", because sexual function is dependent on the vitality of the whole body.

on being a man

rituals and coming of age – why are some men still boys? if you didn't have them, re-invent them. never too late. a vision quest doesn't have to near-kill you to be transformative.

fight or flight: my boss, the sabertooth tiger – **stress response** is to prepare for a fight (adrenaline, blood sugar spike, heart rate rise, contracted visual field, blood shunted away from digestion/core) and injury (constricted capillaries – so you bleed less). *all* stress causes these responses, but all that preparation is wasted when the stress is a nasty email from your boss. you need to move and *use* that adrenaline or it will fester.

emotions: love and tenderness and tears (and also anger) – learning not to block the emotional response, whatever it takes to acknowledge and bring out feelings. past generations were taught to block their soft feelings. today's may be taught to hide their anger. what's left?

lost lore – to some extent, women are recovering theirs—knitting is in vogue—but men get *Grand Theft Auto*. start anywhere. **primitive skills:** firemaking, whittling, tracking, archery, tanning, foraging, gardening. plant and animal/bird ID. even “modern” skills: plumbing, carpentry, electrical, etc—the unifying idea is *self-sufficiency*.

cycles – men have them. you can tune into them, learn something about yourself—if you're willing to do the **perceptive/reflective/connective work**. which might mean doing less (external-world) work, counter to the **homogenized experience & use of time** our culture espouses.

one of them is the **sleep cycle**. is yours shortened/disturbed? how will that affect all others? **sleep debt** -> hypercortisolemia, insulin resistance, etc. **melatonin dysregulation** -> energy disruptions / crashes / insomnia. vicious cycles require intervention.

there are cycles of **introversion and extroversion**. (cf. the red tent.) do you get to be alone, truly, ever? the best is **forestime**: go to the woods with a notebook and a knife and as little else as you can; relax, breathe. if this is difficult, examine the difficulty. **your imbalances will present themselves to you:** urges, twitches, tensions, replaying experiences, abstracting from presence.

manly herbalism – when treating men, it may be better to start with something intense/immediate, then transition into nutritive/tonic uses. get them to buy in / trust it'll work, then convince them to do the slow work. (i have mixed feelings about this slant, but sometimes it's useful.)

for compliance, try challenging. “do you feel unfocused after lunch? take a walk, it'll improve your productivity! do you have discipline/control or not?” see also 100 Pushups and the like.

adaptogens – support masculinity. also, a class of herbs they'll be eager to take. ginseng, eleuthero, fo-ti, licorice, ashwagandha, goji, schisandra, reishi, astragalus, nettle seed.

zoom balls – powdered herbs + nut butter, optional honey.



home-brewing – a good way to get a man interested in herbs. home-brewing has a long history and a lot of room for exploration. it's easy to start! visit Modern Brewer at 2304 Mass Ave.

beer: it's more than hops! – used to be, can be again. why hops? yarrow, mugwort, etc. *Sacred and Healing Herbal Beers*, Stephen Buhner.

mead – honey + water + yeast + time = mead. herbs can fit in several places in that process. *The Compleat Mead-Maker*, Ken Schramm.

cider – soft cider + yeast + time = hard cider.

fortified wines – because "fortified" sounds manlier than "herb-infused". ginseng is best taken this way.

exercise – first, what is strength? bulldog arms vs. cirque-fit.

movement habits & efficient exercise – make it varied, make it interesting. move frequently at a slow pace, sprint, lift heavy. but also: yoga, tai-chi, martial arts (the ones more art than martial), rock climbing, circus arts, parkour, . . .

20 min of active exercise = 15pt drop in blood pressure, for at least 2 hours. after a while, it starts to stay down! note this is *active* exercise – this should be in addition to your baseline movement habits (standing [desk], walking [meetings], taking the stairs, commuting by foot or bike, etc. 20 min in the gym doesn't counteract 8 hrs of sitting down.

men have pelvic floors, too – “kegels” vs Kegel vs pelvic floor exercise: walking, squatting. avoid treadmill, excess bicycle-riding due to poor biomechanics of these activities. this also extends into stretching, yoga, other “womanly” exercises.

heat excess or fluid deficiency? – sometimes it's hard to tell. sometimes anxiety, inflammation, and insomnia are not heat/fire/yang excess but fluid/water/yin deficiency – ie, you don't have enough water to boil the leather cauldron without singeing, enough yin to come down from the dry sky.

false heat: tends to be dry, lack of lubricating fluids. arthritis, constipation, hypertension (sometimes), etc. use sweet tonics (marshmallow, solomon's seal, licorice, American ginseng) instead of sedatives – you can injure an otherwise healthy heat. Americans are very frequently of false fire.

some common problems for men

sports medicine

muscle rub – ginger/cayenne, yarrow, crampbark/kava, willow/meadowsweet, wintergreen

heal-all salve – plantain/comfrey, calendula, yarrow, st john's wort, goldenseal

joint liniment – solomon's seal, mullein, yarrow, st john's wort, ginger/cayenne



heartburn – [we have a recording on this topic available on our website. also, see Chris Kresser's comprehensive series: chriskresser.com/heartburn]
first, determine if high or low acid. ACV shot test.

most often caused by **low stomach acid**. poorly digested carbs + bacterial overgrowth = gas = increased intra-abdominal pressure. hiatal hernia (that's +IAP again – see also mechanicalignment causes of +IAP), the *postprandial proximal gastric acid pocket* and 300. Tums fixes the immediate pain but exacerbates the overall problem. PPIs make you dependent and worsen the root cause.

stomach acid functions:

- digestion and absorption of nutrients
- stimulates pepsin (digestive enzyme)
- kills germs/pathogens
- low levels of stomach acid → malnutrition, ∴ can lead to almost any ailment
- vicious cycle: malnutrition → low acid → malnutrition++.

ulcers & h. pylori: needs to be in balance. why does it get out of balance? maybe your stomach acid is low! maybe your food isn't nourishing! and, h. pylori is involved in leptin/ghrelin regulation!

also, please pay attention: your *heart is burning*. (read: **stress**.) when in sympathetic nervousstate, saliva production decreased & peristalsis inhibited. parasympathetic 'stimulation' is required to retain the resting tone of the LES.

so, herbally:

- bitters! (cf. HCl supplementation.) esp calamus.
- demulcents for attacks, vulneraries to repair. mallow, s.elm, licorice.
- nervines as necessary. catnip.

lower digestive issues – constipation → increased toxin load in the portal blood. when the liver is not able to deal with the toxin load, it spills into the blood: endotoxin. take care of the liver: milk thistle, calendula, st j for most cases. increase bile flow w/ bitters: lubricant laxative, also carries toxins out from the liver. make sure sufficient fiber to absorb the bile now that it's done with its job.

heart disease – CVD is long in the making; if symptomatic, it's late in the game. hawthorn/motherwort/linden nourishing for any heartrouble, safe even if on heart meds. emotions! burdens! and then:

- **systemic inflammation:** minimize stressors. don't overtrain. sleep. fix the food – get more ω-3s, fewer 6s (pro-inflammatory, rancid). eat berries (flavonoids) & other antioxidant foods/herbs (garlic, turmeric).
- **cholesterol:** this is most often a consequence of the inflammation; fix the food. high cholesterol puts you at risk of something very dangerous: being put on statins (muscle wasting, impotence, liver damage, cognitive impairment, etc). they're metabolized by CYP3A4, so if someone's on statins, be careful w/ st j (subtractive) & grapefruit (additive = more statin side effects). CoQ10. instead: garlic (cooked; raw is for infection), fish oils.
- **hypertension** (high blood pressure): repeated situational stress becomes chronic state – *excess fire*. calming nervines: motherwort (esp for palpitations), linden, etc. aromatic diaphoretics to release heat, e.g. yarrow. smooth muscle relaxants (vessels lined w/ smooth muscle) e.g. valerian, crampbark, kava. sleep hygiene. meditation.



- **thyroid**: regulates calcium utilization. in men, hypothyroid manifests as heart disease. magnesium, D3, K2. warming herbs, seaweeds (iodine: digitata > kelp/bladderwrack > alaria).

adrenal depletion – chronic fatigue. watch how this descends out of **abuse of cycle**.

- adrenals produce **stress hormones**, adrenaline and cortisol – and also, **sex hormones** / androgens (testosterone, etc). all these are steroids, cholesterol-derived.
- adrenaline fires you up; cortisol cools you down, clears inflammation, raises blood sugar (opposes insulin). a chronically stressful environment with an inflammatory / insulinemic diet drains the adrenals, causes **resistance**. adrenaline sensitivity is a factor in fat-burning.
- **stress state** overlays baseline state: "on alert" with periods of fight/flight/freak/freeze, no drop down into parasympathetic, rest/digest state.
- multiple consequences for other endocrine hormones & organs – thyroid (calcium balance, heart trouble), satiety/hunger hormones, insulin sensitivity, testes & testosterone, etc.
- **licorice**: extends the half-life of cortisol, so your adrenals don't have to produce as much. phytosterols fill the cortisol-breakdown spots in the liver & slow its metabolism; other constituents bind with cortisol-binding proteins in the blood. use care w/ hypertensives.
- other **adaptogens**: eleuthero (stamina for marathon stress), nettle seed (burnout), fo-ti (aged-like), ashwagandha (circadian rhythms), schisandra (with liver component), rhodiola?, etc.
- **liver tonics** to support breakdown of bound/used-up hormones: milk thistle, sarsaparilla, sassafras, calamus, st john's wort, calendula.
- nourish the **kidneys**, the adrenals are rooted in them. nettle & friends!

impotence

- 75% is weak circulatory system! movement, squatting. ginkgo, hawthorn, motherwort. chocolate: [psycho|vaso]relaxant, skin surface circulatory. avoid cigarettes (stress response in a stick! constricts capillaries – bad for erections).
- adrenal depletion: androgens made in adrenals. (are you overproducing adrenaline / cortisol?) sarsaparilla, adaptogens, ?pine pollen? (purported natural testosterone source).
- can also be emotional/low libido: chocolate/honey with damiana, cayenne. flower essences.
- short-term, while correcting the underlying: yohimbe, muira puama.

infertility – as distinct from impotence. estimated 20-40% of conception failures are the male. mechanical concerns: heat (hot tub, constricting clothing), circulatory/vascular insufficiency. **endocrine tonics**: Am.ginseng, licorice, sarsaparilla, sassafras, maca (improves motility, volume, population of ejaculate – primarily through nourishment). of course those both come after nutrition (PB's vit C reference), [pelvic floor] exercise, sleep, and [other forms of] stress.

prostate conditions – Green's Hypothesis #1: herbs used to nourish and tone the female reproductive system can be used to nourish and tone the male reproductive system. for cycle (raspberry, nettle, ashwagandha), congestion (damiana, angelica, partridgeberry), andropause (licorice, eleuthero).

prostatitis – inward swelling constricts urinary/ejaculatory vessels, ∴ stream quality is affected. full but can't pee, scanty, dribbling. could be result of UTI: pumpkin seed, kava, yarrow, uva ursi, goldenrod, ~~cornsilk~~ (GMO). related: an inflammatory pattern similar to interstitial cystitis: feel like there's more pee to come even though empty: kava, yarrow (2 droppers in a glass of water).



BPH (benign prostatic hypertrophy) – excess dihydrotestosterone makes prostate grow; buffer the androgens? support liver clearance! saw palmetto, nettle root, fireweed (epilobium / willow-herb), mitchella (diuretic/astringent), yarrow. smooth muscle relaxants (crampbark, kava).

cancer – in men younger than 40-50, metastasizes very aggressively; use cancer protocol (zero-sugar, anti-ox, phytonutrient-rich, lymph-moving) w/ anti-inflammatory urinary herbs (yarrow, kava, marshmallow). in older men, it's slow-growing: "you don't die of it, you die with it." surgery oft has complications worse than the original problem, because so very delicate and almost impossible to avoid collateral damage.

materia medica

ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) – "Indian ginseng." warm. adaptogen. builds/restores stamina, thyroid/adrenal function. helps regain circadian (and other) rhythms. iron-rich.

calamus (*Acorus calamus*) – warming, bitter. spirit-sustaining. normalizes stomach acid production.

catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) – warm, dry. for anxiety rising from the stomach; releases gaseous and psychological pressures which contribute to reflux.

eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) – "Siberian ginseng". for stamina, persistence, marathon-style stresses.

fo-ti (*Polygonum multiflorum* / *Fallopia multiflora*) – he shou wu, 'mr wu has black hair'. warm. supports adrenals. also, martial arts medicine (liniment for contusions).

garlic (*Allium sativum*) – hot, very dry. eat cooked regularly in large amounts for hypertension, circulatory congestion of any degree – unless due to dryness. onion similar.

ginger (*Zingiber off.*) – hot. digestive, carminative, circulatory stimulant, anti-emetic. fresh more dispersive, dry more centrally-warming.

ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) – warm, dispersive. circulatory tonic, promotes blood flow & oxygenation, esp. for cerebral arteries; memory.

ginseng (*Panax ginseng*) – hot. 'male' tonic, all-around adaptogen. strengthening, rooting. good steeped in wine. American (*P. quinquefolius*) less heating than Asian, more of a yin tonic.

goji berry (*Lycium chinense*) – aka lycii. warm, sweet. blood builder. good after a knock-down workout.

hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*) – cool, nourishing. heart tonic. safe even on heart meds. good for all the hearts.

hops (*Humulus lupulus*) – cold, dry. sleep. insomnia, hypertension, overactive libido.



kava (Piper methysticum) – warm, moist. muscle relaxant, doesn't impair cognitive function. light mind, calm presence without sedation. good for neck-tension headache, tight lower back. urinary disinfectant.

licorice (Glycyrrhiza glabra) – warm, moist, sweet tonic. adrenals: constituents in licorice fill in the cortisol-breakdown spots in the liver (so it is metabolized more slowly and is able to do more work per unit), others bind to cortisol-binding proteins in the blood. heartburn: demulcent, anti-inflammatory. liver: hepatoprotective (Japanese use of IV glycyrrhizin for cirrhosis), moderates inflammation.

milk thistle (Silybum marianum) – cool, nutritive. liver-healing & hepatoprotective. aids glutathione oxidase (liver antioxidant) system, ∴ reduces inflammation. promotes liver regeneration. constituents enter the entero-hepatic loop, recirculate. works in [store-bought] capsules, unlike most herbs.

motherwort (Leonurus cardiaca) – cool. heart palpitations, heart insecurity (see also: linden).

nettle (Urtica dioica) – cool, very dry. leaf is mineral-rich, nourishing, kidney-specific, mild diuretic. fresh tincture / freeze-dried capsules for antihistaminic effect. seeds are classical adaptogens: burnout, exhaustion, depletion. (search commonwealthherbs.com for *nettle and friends*.)

sarsaparilla (Smilax regelii / S. ornata) – warm. hepatic supportive, mild liver stimulant. alterative, specific to genitourinary system. saponin constituents reputed to be pre-steroidal-hormones, ∴ supportive to adrenals – but the majority of its effects are likely due to its actions on the liver.

sassafras (Sassafras albidum) – warm. alterative, liver stimulant. grounding. mix with sarsaparilla and all your favorite roots – root beer tea! (search commonwealthherbs.com for *rooted and ready*.)

saw palmetto (Serenoa repens) – prostate inflammation. BPH, prostatitis, etc. reputed to be anabolic; encourages body-building, weight gain.

schisandra (Schisandra chinensis) – "five-flavor berry." tonic to adrenals & endocrine sys, useful when stress or inflammation has strained them. high doses (3-6 g td powder, ½-1 oz tincture).

yarrow (Achillea millefolium) – dispersive, bitter, aromatic. vital stimulant. releases pent-up heat and frustration, provides emotional/energetic armor. urinary disinfectant.

yohimbe (Pausinystalia yohimbe / Corynanthe yohimbe) – intense circulatory stimulant. for **short-term** use in impotence, while addressing other factors w/ diet, exercise, etc. blocks adrenaline's effect on alpha receptors, including those in heart & brain, ∴ contraindicated in HBP – adrenals could run wild because there's no feedback accounting for how much is in the system.