**Melanie Cole (Host):** So often men who have any issues at all with their sexual abilities or any other aspect of their health, they tend to be reluctant to speak with their physician. They feel embarrassed about discussing these things and they really don’t always even want to go to the doctor. So here to discuss men’s health issues is Dr. Carson Wong. He’s a urologist with Memorial Health System. Dr. Wong, as I said in the intro, men are hesitant to even go to the doctor, my husband included. What do you want men to know about the importance of seeing their primary care provider, their urologist, their dentist, anybody else and getting these checkups?

**Dr. Carson Wong (Guest):** Well what you’re saying is so true and historically that was very, very prevalent as men tended to have to maintain the machismo and did not really engage in locker room discussions regarding these things, where as our female counterparts are much better at that, as evident by breast cancer awareness and all the things that have been going on. However, in recent times, Men’s Health Magazine, there have been community events where more and more urologic procedures or urologic conditions have become more acceptable to be discussed on a social – in a social setting, specifically some of the things that you’ve touched upon, erectile dysfunction, problems with voiding, these are things that tend to happen as we men have more birthdays. TV commercials and the fact that we’re actually having a conversation over the radio right now regarding this issue, so the key thing is to say that here are certain things that one must get checked in order to decrease the risk of bad things happening down the line. So specifically I think that we should focus on I think for urologists is voiding symptoms, prostate issues, and the other thing that’s been more publicized because of certain oral medications that have become en vogue is erectile dysfunction.

**Host:** Well so you’re a urologist, so let’s start right there with your expertise. Women have our mammograms. We see our gynecologists. We’ve been doing it since we’re 16. What do you want men to know about coming to see your in particular, urologist, because maybe we can get them into see another doctor, but they don’t always want to go to see a urologist and get that checkup and get the prostate checked, so what do you want them to know about the importance of coming to see a urologist and what is it that you are looking for and looking at?

**Dr. Wong:** Okay, well in general the prostate is the issue that – that is the organ that is unique to us men and that’s obviously located in an area that’s not very accessible. It’s not as accessible as the breast for self examination by any means for detecting breast cancer, and the thing with the prostate is that there are conditions that are noncancerous that can affect your quality of life, and of course there are cancer conditions that could definitely affect not only your quality of life but your longevity. So one must take steps to determine if it’s one situation or the other because that definitely will impact on them both from a quality of life and health perspective. From a quality of life perspective, if men as they get older, they have difficult with urination, common things being a weak urine stream, peeing more frequently during the day and night, or not being able to empty their bladder appropriately, those are usually signs or symptoms of hey something might be going array, and that could be something as simple as just a benign enlargement of the prostate or something a little more complicated like cancer. Unfortunately, based on symptoms alone, one can not determine one or the other. So the current recommendations for screening are that men at the age of 50 should in general get their prostate examined with two components. One is a physical examination or a digital rectal examination and two is a serum blood test or a PSA or prostate specific antigen. These are basic things that can be done during one office visit, and it is strictly a screening tool. It is not a diagnostic tool, but it is a screening tool which if there is an abnormality, it will flag that individual at risk for something potentially a little bit more sinister, and therefore you should seek urologic care.

**Host:** What great information Dr. Wong, what a great educator you are. So another thing that you mentioned, sexual dysfunction and low testosterone and we see this all over the media besides, in commercials, and on the radio, tell us about these kinds of issues that men face and if there are treatments available, what do you tell them?

**Dr. Wong:** Well that’s probably one of those things that are more – men are more reluctant to discuss especially given the thought or perspective of embarrassment. However, as we age that’s sometimes something that is inevitable or one may have other conditions that can increase one’s risk of developing erectile dysfunction. For example, you mentioned something like a low testosterone, which is something that is definitely treatable but also other non-urologic conditions can put one at risk such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and different medications that one has to take in order to treat those other conditions can also result in erectile dysfunction. So the take home message is that are they treatable? The answer is yes. Both conditions are, low testosterone or erectile dysfunction and there are many options, much have been publicized recently with the advent – well not so recently now but probably within the last decade with a pill that can treat erectile dysfunction and subsequent to that other pills have come on the market, in addition to other therapies that have been around prior to this oral medication.

**Host:** Wow it’s so interesting and such great information. Now moving along a little bit onto some other topics, stress because while you’re talking about urologic conditions and sexual dysfunction, men experience stress. I mean women, obviously we do, but as you say we talk about it all the time, we’re always talking about all that stuff but men don’t and stress, depression, lack of sleep are other things I feel that men are not as willing to discuss, Dr. Wong. What would you like them to know about the importance of discussing those things with their physician because they can contribute to all these other conditions we’re discussing?

**Dr. Wong:** Right they absolutely can be confounding issues that can result in the issues that are specific to our discipline. That’s something that once you bring up – once you have a willingness to address some of those other issues that we discussed earlier, then the follow up questions that arise from that discussion should include some of the things that you outlined here such as what stressors, what life issues that can potentially contribute to or even sometimes bring on the onset of some of those issues and if some of those things get addressed, lifestyle habits, etc. get addressed, then the urologic issue in question may actually resolve and you really don’t necessarily need primary treatment for the condition itself.

**Host:** That’s interesting. Now before we wrap up Dr. Wong, speak to the partners of men. How can we get them into see any physician? What do you want us to say because threats don’t always work, saying you’re not going to be around for your children’s graduation doesn’t always work, what can we say? Give us the starting point, and then I’d like to ask you to offer them your best advice so that they can take care of themselves for their good health.

**Dr. Wong:** Well the best advice that I can offer them is that you would rather deal with something when it is a quality of life issue than when it becomes, than waiting until it becomes a medical issue. So by that I mean when it’s a quality of life issue, for example, voiding, if it’s just an inconvenience to have to get up at night or if it’s just your stream is a little bit weaker and it takes you longer to empty your bladder. That is a quality of life issue in which I as a professional can offer options for you from lifestyle modifications to medications to proceed, but it is still your decision whether or not you would like to accept those options as a treatment because it is purely a quality of life issue. If you wait and you let it progress and it becomes what I like to call a medical issue, when there are clear problems that are no longer just your quality of life, such as you’re unable to pee or if you have blood in the urine, infections, or develop stones, or god forbid, have the C word, then that becomes what I call a medical issue and when it’s a medical issues, you no longer as an individual have the ability to – you don’t necessarily have the luxury of deciding well yes I would like to go ahead with this recommendation or nah, I can defer. Of course, in any medical treatment you can always defer, however, sometimes deferral in a medical situation may not be in your best interest.

**Host:** You are spot on Dr. Wong, and I am going to have my husband listen to this podcast and all of your great advice and I think that men everywhere need to listen to this great advice because they are hesitant but it’s a different world now and they can discuss these things and they should not be embarrassed because you are a specialist and this is what you do and thank you so much for joining us again today, and that wraps up this episode of Memorial Health Radio with Memorial Health System. Head on over to our website at mhsystem.org for more information and to get connected with one of our providers. If you found this podcast as informative as I did and you know how important it is that the men you love listen to it, please share on your social media, share with your friends and family, and be sure to check out all the other fascinating podcasts in our library. I’m Melanie Cole.