

Buck Up: The real bloke's guide to getting healthy and living longer

Buck Shelford and Grant Schofield

Reviewed by **Peter Sandiford** MBChB, PhD, MMedSci, MSc, FRSM, FFPH, FNZCPHM

Public Health Physician,
Planning and Funding,
Waitemata DHB, Auckland,
New Zealand

I agreed to review this book with some trepidation, as I am not sure the book was intended for someone like me who doubts his 'real bloke' credentials. Nevertheless, my interest in men's health, and perhaps more pertinently my interest in my own health as a 52-year-old male easily overcame these qualms and I was rewarded as a result.

Buck Up is written by All Black legend Buck Shelford together with AUT public health professor Grant Schofield. The former provides a 'down-to-earth' personal account of his battle with lymphoma and his efforts to keep in top physical and mental health, despite going through a period of significant weight gain. Grant Schofield annotates Buck's exposition with the relevant medical facts and figures, along with some of the empirical evidence from which these are derived. The book provides a wealth of practical advice on how to get and stay fit, how to attain and maintain a healthy weight, and how to keep mental resilience in the face of modern life's challenges. The final section entitled 'Medical Stuff' is a useful compendium of information on some of the key risks and health problems that men may have to confront, including the all-important prostate cancer.

Although I would consider myself reasonably well informed on much of the topic matter in this book, I think I learned a lot from reading it (especially on matters to do with rugby and fitness that I am perhaps not so well versed in). I was also pleased to find myself agreeing with many of the more philosophical viewpoints

expressed by Buck and Grant, such as the need to allow more free-ranging risk taking (within reason) by children, and the importance of family mealtimes. I even found myself doing a bit more exercise.

Inevitably there were a few things that I would like the authors to have done differently. I felt that a book on men's health shouldn't go without a section offering help on how to quit smoking, and I would like to have seen randomised trials featuring more prominently in the cited evidence for the benefits of exercise. An exhortation to greater workplace and recreational safety would also have been welcome. To avoid extending the length of the book, perhaps the section on sports nutrition, which is probably only relevant to a minority of readers, could have been omitted.

These are minor quibbles though and I will heartily recommend the book to my male friends and my wife too—because, in a way, the title of the book seems to narrow down its potential readership a bit too much. You don't have to be a real bloke to enjoy its chatty style and benefit from its advice. In fact, encouraging one's partner to read at least the sections on diet and eating is surely going to greatly increase the chance of making and sustaining the sort of changes that the book recommends.

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CORRESPONDENCE TO:
Peter Sandiford
peter.sandiford@
waitematadhb.govt.nz

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