

# Men's Health Week 2016



## The Toolbox for Action



MEN'S HEALTH WEEK

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# Men's Health Week 2016

## Why do we need to focus upon men's health issues and needs?

Males constitute almost 50% of the population on the island of Ireland and, therefore, deserve to have a gender lens focused upon their specific health needs. Research shows that these men experience a disproportionate burden of ill-health and die too young ...

- Local men die, on average, four and a half years younger than women do.
- Males have higher death rates than women for all of the leading causes of death.
- Poor lifestyles are responsible for a high proportion of chronic diseases.
- Late presentation to health services leads to a large number of problems becoming untreatable ...



Indeed, while many of these conditions are preventable, their prevalence amongst men may, in fact, rise in the future. However, this is not a lost cause. Much can be / is being done to improve this situation.

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## When is Men's Health Week (MHW)?

Men's Health Week (MHW) always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. This year, it will run from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> until Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

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## Where is MHW celebrated?

MHW is celebrated in most European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and a number of other places worldwide.

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## What are the aims of MHW?

Internationally, the core aims of MHW each year are to ...

- Heighten awareness of preventable health problems for males of all ages.
- Support men and boys to engage in healthier lifestyle choices / activities.
- Encourage the early detection and treatment of health difficulties in males.

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## Is there a specific theme this year?

Each year, individual countries focus upon a specific theme. The theme for 2016 on the island of Ireland is: *'Men United - for Health and Wellbeing'*.

This is different to the theme in England and Wales - which focuses upon beating stress.

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## Why choose the theme 'Men United - for Health and Wellbeing' for 2016?

Not too long ago, we were unaware of the full extent of men's poor health status and the specific health issues that they face. However, this is no longer the case. In recent years, a broad range of research has highlighted the health challenges which face men in Ireland and further afield. For example ...

- Men's Health in Ireland ([www.mhfi.org/fullreport.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/fullreport.pdf))
- Getting Inside Men's Health ([www.mhfi.org/gettinginsidemenshealth.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/gettinginsidemenshealth.pdf))
- Men's Health in Northern Ireland: Tackling the Root Causes of Men's [ill] Health ([www.mhfi.org/manmattersbriefing1.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/manmattersbriefing1.pdf))
- A Report on the all-Ireland Young Men and Suicide Project ([www.mhfi.org/ymspfullreport.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/ymspfullreport.pdf))
- Facing the Challenge - The Impact of Recession and Unemployment on Men's Health in Ireland ([www.mhfi.org/IPHreport2011.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/IPHreport2011.pdf))
- A Report on the Excess Burden of Cancer among Men in the Republic of Ireland ([www.mhfi.org/ICSreport2013.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/ICSreport2013.pdf))
- The State of Men's Health in Europe ([www.mhfi.org/menshealtheurope.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/menshealtheurope.pdf)) ...

Although the health of men in Ireland is poor, it can be improved in many significant ways. Work has already taken place to support the health needs of men and boys: Ireland was the first country in the world to have a National Men's Health Policy; the 'Engage' men's health training programme has influenced how services and structures support males; new innovative and pioneering initiatives have been developed which provide models for improving aspects of men's health ... Much has been achieved, but there is still room for more.

But men's health is not just an issue for individual men. While it is crucial for men to take responsibility for looking after themselves, their health can often be determined by other factors outside of their personal control. Thus, there is also a need for policy-makers, service providers, and society as a whole to recognise the role that they need to play, and to do something practical about it. This will require a coordinated and collaborative approach.

There is little doubt that more progress can be made when everyone pulls in the same direction. 'Men United - for Health and Wellbeing' captures the essence of this movement. It calls upon everyone to ask themselves / their organisations the basic question: 'Are we winning?' ... If this is not the case, then we need to consider joining with other people to do something that will make a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of men and boys throughout the island of Ireland. MHW 2016 offers a launch pad to do this.

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## What were the themes for MHW in previous years?

Previous MHWs in Ireland have focused upon ...

- 2005 - Obesity
- 2006 - Mental Wellbeing
- 2007 - Long-Term Conditions
- 2008 - Health in the Workplace
- 2009 - Access to Services
- 2010 - Physical Activity
- 2011 - Supporting Men and Boys during Challenging Times
- 2012 - What's Your First Instinct ... Fight? Flight? Find Out?
- 2013 - Action Men - Turning Words into Actions
- 2014 - Challenges and Choices: What's Your Aim?
- 2015 - Creating Culture Change



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## Who is the target audience?

The purpose of MHW is to draw attention to the health and wellbeing issues affecting men and boys, and to encourage / promote personal, structural and systemic change where possible. This, therefore, implies that any messages and engagement needs to target:

- Males themselves
- Policy / decision-makers
- Service providers
- Public awareness and preconceptions

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## Who can be involved in this week?

MHW gives everyone (health professionals, service providers, youth groups, sporting bodies, community organisations, employers, Churches, policy makers, family workers, pharmacists, the media, parents, individuals ...) an opportunity to encourage men and boys to take better care of their health and to seek help or treatment at an early stage.

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## How can my organisation get involved?

Absolutely everyone can do something to support and celebrate MHW 2016. The focus for this year (i.e. *'Men United - for Health and Wellbeing'*) lends itself to a wide range of ways to mark this occasion. However, anything which promotes the week and encourages men and boys to lead healthier lifestyles, to be more aware of preventable health problems, and to seek early detection and treatment for health difficulties is very welcome.

A range of practical ideas for how you or your organisation can be involved in MHW 2016 can be found online at: [www.mhfi.org/mhw2016celebrateit.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw2016celebrateit.pdf) These suggestions range from the simple and free, to large-scale and expensive!

You could also consider helping to distribute the new, free, 32 page 'Challenges and Choices' mini-manual for men (see [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2016.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2016.html) for details).

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## Are there any ways that I can promote the week?

There is a common logo / image pack which can be used by everyone who wishes to raise awareness of MHW. There is also a MHW 2016 poster and postcard. These are important promotional tools - as one of the key aims is to let as many people as possible know about the week. These are available, free, to anyone who wishes to use them. See [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html) for more details.

Promotion of MHW could take the form of:

- Putting a [Men's Health Week poster](#) (or two or three) up in your workplace / meeting space / community centre / local shop / waiting room / Men's Shed / home ... and/or sending the postcards to people you know.
- Promoting the week on your website - using a copy of the [Men's Health Week logo](#) and/or other MHW images.

- Linking to the Men's Health Forum in Ireland's website page devoted to Men's Health Week 2016 ([www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2016.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2016.html)) from your own website, Facebook page or other social networking site.
- Sending an email to everyone in your contacts list to tell them about Men's Health Week, and asking them to forward the message to all their contacts. Why not also insert the MHW logo into your outgoing emails for the months of May and June?
- Becoming a fan of the Men's Health Week in Ireland's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek](http://www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek)) and sending this link to all your online friends.
- Including information on Men's Health Week in your mailouts / newsletters.
- Telling others about what is happening in your area during Men's Health Week by posting details on the MHFI website. Use the form at: [www.mhfi.org/mhw/promote-an-event.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/promote-an-event.html)
- Making the Men's Health Week logo your computer desktop 'wallpaper' during May and June.
- Reminding your colleagues to follow all the latest news on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL](http://www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL)). Also Tweeting about the week yourself, and including #MHW2016 in your message.
- Encouraging the men you know to get involved in some of the activities taking place around the country during Men's Health Week 2016 ...

Doing one or more of these simple (and free) things would contribute hugely to MHW 2016!

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## What is the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual?

Research clearly shows that there are many challenges to be faced when seeking to improve men's health. However, it also highlights that men's health can be improved in many significant ways - if the right choices are made. Men, themselves, have a key role to play in this process.

One of the most successful and sought after elements of Men's Health Week in 2014 and 2015 was the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual which was distributed free-of-charge to males throughout the whole island of Ireland. Almost all of the 10,000 hard copies of this booklet were given out within a week of their release in each year.



The 'Challenges and Choices' booklet is a male-friendly, 32 page publication, which highlights ten key men's health issues i.e. alcohol, food, physical activity, smoking, stress, blood pressure, sexually transmitted diseases, skin cancers, back care and help-seeking behaviour. It was written by leading men's health expert Dr Ian Banks (internationally acclaimed men's health author, President of the European Men's Health Forum, the British Medical Association's Spokesperson on Men's Health, and a resident of Northern Ireland).

This Manual: issues a realistic and practical challenge to improve the reader's health in each area of concern; provides a reason for why it is important to consider taking action in relation to each issue; offers three possible choices for what actions can be taken to combat each condition; signposts the reader to local sources of help and support.

During MHW 2016, 47,000 copies of this [publication](#) will be made available to men throughout the island of Ireland. These have been funded by the Health Service Executive in the Republic of Ireland, the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland, and the Irish Pharmacy Union (who will be distributing copies via local pharmacies in the Republic of Ireland).

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## Who are the Men's Health Week 'Poster Boys' for 2016?

'Euro 2016' fever is building amongst men in Ireland. Teams from both parts of the island are through to the final stages of the competition, and this really is a unique 'Men United' scenario. Indeed, the Euros kick-off on the Friday before Men's Health Week begins.

Men across the country are planning their viewing schedules (possibly even their working hours), stockpiling enough refreshments to see themselves through a nuclear winter, and making arrangements with their friends for the common sharing of this experience.

Many men are knowledgeable about what lies ahead. They know which teams have got through to this stage; who is in each group; what days and times countries will be playing; what the bookies' odds are for each team to win; which players are likely to be the stars of the competition ...



Euro 2016 has created a common bond among many men. They have a reason to be in each other's company. They are well informed by the media about what lies ahead. They are prepared to give their opinions and stand out from the crowd. They are motivated and excited. They are enthusiastic and want to be involved. They are likely to show more emotion than usual ... They've obviously 'caught a bug'. Maybe Euro Fever is a medical condition after all.

During MHW 2016, Michael O'Neill (Northern Ireland Team Manager) and Martin O'Neill (Republic of Ireland Team Manager) will be the most recognised men in Ireland. We are, therefore, delighted that the two managers have agreed to be the 'poster boys' for MHW this year, and to be associated with the call for everyone to unite to improve the health and wellbeing of local men and boys.

Martin and Michael are the 'face' of Men's Health Week 2016 in Ireland, and will star in a nationwide poster and postcard campaign. They will also appear on the cover of the free, 32 page, 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual which will be given to men across whole the island of Ireland.

However, it's not only Michael and Martin who'll be asking the question '*are we winning?*' during the week. Everyone is encouraged to ask themselves / their organisations this question in relation to men's health and wellbeing. If the answer is that we're not winning, then it's time to consider joining with other people to do something that will make a positive difference for men and boys throughout the island of Ireland.

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## Who has planned Men's Health Week 2016 in Ireland?

MHW in Ireland has been planned by a broad range of partners who contributed to an inter-agency Planning Group (see [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2016.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2016.html) for a list of members). This body began meeting in January 2016, and has had ongoing communication ever since.

The planning process drew upon the insight, expertise, support and contacts of diverse organisations (voluntary, community, statutory and academic sectors as well as men's groups) from across the whole of Ireland. The group was convened and coordinated by the [Men's Health Forum in Ireland](#) (MHFI). MHFI works alongside other Men's Health Fora worldwide to focus attention upon male health issues.

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## What is the Men's Health Forum in Ireland?

The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) is a diverse network of individuals and organisations, men and women, from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Forum was established in 1999, and operates on an all-island basis. At present, it has one temporary self-employed worker, but is, primarily, structured, organised and run using the expertise, resources and enthusiasm of volunteers.

MHFI is a charitable organisation which is registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee. The Forum seeks to promote all aspects of the health and wellbeing of men and boys on the island of Ireland through research, training, networking, health initiatives and advocacy. It is managed by a Board of Trustees.

One of MHFI's core areas of work is the coordination of Men's Health Week (MHW) activity on the island of Ireland each year. More details can be found at: [www.mhfi.org](http://www.mhfi.org)

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## How can I find out more about MHW?

To find out more about Men's Health Week 2016, contact ...

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or visit ...

Website: [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2016.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2016.html)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek](https://www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek)  
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MensHealthIRL>

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Text side of MHW 2016 Postcard