

Ministers launch Men's Health Week 2018 and ask people in Ireland to take 'one small step for man, one giant leap for men's health'

As the first country in the world to adopt a National Men's Health Policy - and a dedicated Healthy Ireland Men's Action Plan - Ireland has been a long standing international leader in the field of men's health. Minister for Health Simon Harris TD and Minister of State for Health Promotion Catherine Byrne TD seek to build upon this success by joining with the 70+ organisations in the inter-agency all-island Planning Group to officially start the countdown to Men's Health Week 2018. During this week, local men, communities and service providers are encouraged to take 'one small step' to further improve the health and wellbeing of Irish men and boys.

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 11th until Sunday 17th June, with additional key health topics being highlighted from Saturday 9th June. It is celebrated in many European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and a number of other places worldwide. It is coordinated on the island of Ireland by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI), and supported by HSE Health Promotion and Improvement in the Republic of Ireland and the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland.

MHW aims to heighten awareness of preventable health problems, support men and boys to engage in healthier lifestyles, and encourage the early detection and treatment of health difficulties.

Despite the ground-breaking achievements made in Ireland, men still experience higher death rates than women for all the leading causes of death and die, on average, four and a half years younger. This has wide-reaching repercussions which stretch far beyond the life satisfaction of men themselves, and impacts upon the women in their lives, their families, friends, work colleagues, industry and the economy. Thus, improving the health of men will have substantial gains for individual men, their support networks, local communities and society as a whole.

Speaking about Men's Health Week Simon Harris, Minister for Health said:

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“This is a great opportunity to prompt men and boys across Ireland to look after their own health and wellbeing. I would encourage everyone to take small steps to live healthier lives and to ensure they get regular check-ups. Initiatives such as Men’s Health Week are a key part of creating a society where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health, and where wellbeing is valued and supported.”

This year, Men’s Health Week has borrowed from Astronaut Neil Armstrong’s immortal phrase: ‘One small step for man. One giant leap for mankind’, spoken almost fifty years ago. Men’s Health Week 2018, is focussed upon asking men ‘*what’s your small step going to be?*’ By taking at least one small step to improve their own health and the health of males throughout the country, it is hoped that this will lead to a giant leap for men’s health.

Throughout the week, a number of themes (see Editor’s Notes) will be highlighted each day, and a range of events will take place nationwide organised by many of the 70 partner organisations and local groups. Two celebrity ‘Men’s Health Ambassadors’ - Brent Pope and Jamesie O’Connor - are helping to raise awareness of Men’s Health Week 2018 by drawing upon their own personal experiences of taking small steps to overcome health difficulties.

Jamesie O’Connor, former GAA player and current pundit:

“I am delighted to support Men’s Health Week because as a teacher and a coach, I see the importance of challenging unhelpful stereotypes and supporting boys and young men to develop good habits in relation to their health early in life. When boys are encouraged and supported to mind their physical and mental wellbeing then it becomes normal to them throughout their lives. Parents, teachers and coaches all need to work together to set boys on the right track to good health.”

Brent Pope, rugby pundit and well known mental health advocate added:

As somebody that has suffered with severe anxiety most of my life, I want to see more men get a better understanding and awareness of their own mental health so they can live healthier lives and be able to maintain their health and wellbeing. I always felt less of a man for asking for help and I don’t want others to feel that way, unlike in my day. Today, there are great organisations and resources out there that can help such as the yourmentalhealth.ie a national website that are available and want to reach out specifically to men.”

Even small, simple changes can result in significant health improvements for men, and to support the 'small steps' key message during Men's Health Week 2018, MHFI has produced a free 32 page Man Manual. Titled 'Challenges and Choices', this publication poses ten practical challenges to men, explains why action is needed in each area, and offers the reader a range of simple and realistic actions to improve their health. To date, over 100,000 hard copies of this booklet have been read by Irish men.

Dr Stephanie O'Keeffe, National Director, HSE, Strategic Planning and Transformation explained:

"Evidence clearly shows that men's health can be improved in many significant ways - if men are offered positive choices, and are given the support, encouragement and opportunities to succeed. This Man Manual provides the information and the tools, while Men's Health Week offers the opportunity and a launch pad to make a real change. The HSE is working with organisations such as the Men's Development Network, the Irish Men's Sheds Association, Sport Ireland and the Irish Heart Foundation in order to deliver programmes to men at community level and support other health and social services in their work targeting men."

Men's Health Week offers an opportunity for a broad range of health professionals, service providers, youth groups, sporting bodies, community organisations, employers, Churches, policy makers, family workers and pharmacists to do something practical to improve the health of local men and boys.

ENDS - followed by Editor's Notes

Editor's Notes:

Further information on Men's Health Week 2018 can be obtained by contacting ...

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- Men's Health Week always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. This year, it will run from Monday 11th until Sunday 17th June. It is celebrated in many European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and a number of other places worldwide. It is coordinated on the island of Ireland by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI).
- The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (www.mhfi.org) is a charity which works on an all-island basis to enhance the health of men and boys. It is a voluntary network of individuals and organisations, men and women, which seeks to identify the key concerns relating to male health and to increase understanding of these issues.
- The core aims of Men's Health Week 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.
- Each year, individual countries focus upon a specific theme. The theme for 2018 on the island of Ireland is: *'One small step for man. One giant leap for men's health'*. Everyone is being asked the question: *'what's your small step going to be?'* and is invited to do something that will make a positive difference to the health of the men and boys that they have contact with and influence over.
- Men's Health Week 2018 in Ireland has been planned by a broad range of 70+ partners who contributed to an inter-agency, all-island Planning Group.
- The celebration of Men's Health Week is supported by the Health Service Executive's Health Promotion and Improvement Department and the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland.
- Key information on Men's Health Week on the island of Ireland is available online ...
 - Full overview of Men's Health Week 2018: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2018.html
 - Briefing paper which answers all of the most common questions: www.mhfi.org/mhw2018toolbox.pdf
 - Men's Health Week posters and images: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html
 - Practical suggestions for organisations on how they can get involved: www.mhfi.org/mhw2018celebrateit.pdf
 - Latest developments: www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek and www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL
 - Some events taking place: www.mhfi.org/mhw2018events.pdf

- Each day of / leading up to Men's Health Week 2018 will focus upon a specific issue:
 - Friday 8th June - Men's health week is coming! ... Here's what you need to know
 - Saturday 9th June - Men and healthy relationships
 - Sunday 10th June - We are what we eat
 - Monday 11th June - Top tips for men's mental fitness
 - Tuesday 12th June - Keeping your heart healthy
 - Wednesday 13th June - Men and cancer
 - Thursday 14th June - Trash the ash ... Men and smoking
 - Friday 15th June - One less today ... Men and alcohol
 - Saturday 16th June - Sports Saturday... Men, physical activity and sport
 - Sunday 17th June - The importance of fathers to children's outcomes

- To view the social media Posts and Tweets planned for #MensHealthWeek visit:
www.mhfi.org/Tweets2018.pdf

- Copies of the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual have been given out to men across Ireland. This booklet issues ten simple and practical challenges to men. After each challenge, there is a reason why it is important to think about this issue. It then offers three choices for action (Do Nothing, DIY, Find an Expert), and explains the consequences of each option.

- A low resolution PDF preview copy of the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual can be accessed online at: www.mhfi.org/challenges2018.pdf

- The total number of resources distributed throughout the island of Ireland for Men's Health Week 2018 was ...
 - 20,000 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manuals
 - 6,000 posters
 - 15,000 postcards
 - 4,000 branded pens

- Minister Harris and Minister Byrne met with some members of the Men's Health Week Planning Group in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, to help to launch Men's Health Week 2018. Download the photograph at: www.mhfi.org/Ministers2018.jpg