

## **MAKING THE CONNECTIONS TO IMPROVE MEN'S HEALTH - the Men's Health Forum in Ireland challenges everyone to 'check-in, check-up, check it out' during Men's Health Week 2021**

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Everyone - men, families, communities, service providers, employers, sporting bodies, churches and policy makers - is being urged to take action to improve the health of men and boys on the island of Ireland by 'Making the Connections' as COVID-19 restrictions are eased across the island of Ireland. That's the message from the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) as the final countdown to International Men's Health Week begins.

Running from Monday 14<sup>th</sup> June to Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June (Father's Day), this annual celebration aims to raise awareness of preventable health problems, support men and boys to live healthier lives, and encourage them to seek help or treatment at an early stage.

Recent research ('Men's Health in Numbers') from the Men's Health Forum in Ireland clearly maps the state of men's health in Ireland. Michael Lynch, Chairperson of MHFI, comments:

*"The findings from this research provide some cause for optimism, along with some grounds for concern.*

*Male life expectancy is increasing; the majority of men across the island of Ireland rate their health as good or very good; the 5-year net survival rate for males with cancer has increased; the proportion of male deaths due to circulatory diseases is falling; the number of males dying by suicide across the island has decreased; fewer men now smoke ...*

*But this needs to be seen in context: the number of cases of prostate cancer has increased, the rate of male diagnoses of gonorrhoea has risen; male obesity and weight is becoming a serious concern; and COVID-19 has had a major impact upon the lives of men and boys.*

*However, one of the most worrying concerns is that incidence rates of disease and chronic conditions are, mostly, higher within areas of deprivation."*

2021 has already been an exceptional year in many ways. The island of Ireland continues to battle with the global COVID-19 pandemic, individuals across the country are trying to re-build their lives, relationships, jobs, finances, physical health, emotional resilience, networks and routines. Some people are living with trauma and bereavement. Others are having to re-focus their priorities. Everyone's mental health has been impacted to some degree.

This is why the theme chosen for Men's Health Week 2021 is 'MAKING THE CONNECTIONS' and the call to action is:

- CHECK IN with yourself to see how you are coping / feeling, and to identify any health worries that you might have.
- CHECK UP on your family, friends, neighbours, colleagues to see how they're doing and to offer your support.
- CHECK IT OUT and seek information / help / support / treatment as soon as possible if you notice anything worrying or which needs medical attention.

Colin Fowler, Director of Operations for MHFI, comments:

*“Men, on the island of Ireland, suffer a disproportionate burden of ill health and die too young. However, this is not a lost cause, and much can be - and is being - done to change this situation.*

*Men's Health Week offers an ideal time to focus our attention upon the needs of men and boys, and to make a positive difference to their lives. There are lots of ways to mark this week: put up a poster; use one of the graphics on your emails; post about the week on social media using the hashtag #MensHealthWeek; join-in an event ... However, perhaps the most practical thing that everyone can do is to join with others on 'Pledge Day' (Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2021), and commit themselves to a simple and realistic action which will improve their own health and/or the health of men and boys generally. Everyone can play their part.”*

At an individual level, men and boys can get involved in the week by making the time to read the free 'Man Manual' (which can be downloaded at: [www.mhfi.org/challenges2021.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/challenges2021.pdf)), and undertaking one or more of the ten core challenges issued within it. This booklet comes with a clear warning: *'Reading this Manual can seriously improve your health!'*

**ENDS**

*[followed by Editor's Notes]*

## **EDITOR'S NOTES**

1. For more information or an interview, contact one of the members of the all-island Men's Health Week Planning Group:
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2. The 'Men's Health in Numbers' publications are available for free downloading from the Men's Health Forum in Ireland website at:
  - Trends on the Island of Ireland - [www.mhfi.org/MensHealthInNumbers1.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/MensHealthInNumbers1.pdf)
  - Irish Men's Health Report Card - [www.mhfi.org/MensHealthInNumbers2.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/MensHealthInNumbers2.pdf)
  - Northern Ireland Men's Health Report Card - [www.mhfi.org/MensHealthInNumbers3.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/MensHealthInNumbers3.pdf)
  
3. Men's Health Week is celebrated across Europe, the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and many other countries.
  
4. On the island of Ireland, Men's Health Week is coordinated by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland with support from over 90 partner organisations. Financial support comes from the Health Service Executive and the Public Health Agency.
  
5. The Men's Health Forum in Ireland ([www.mhfi.org](http://www.mhfi.org)) is a charity which works on an all-island basis to improve 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.
  
6. Key information on Men's Health Week on the island of Ireland is available online ...
  - Full overview of Men's Health Week 2021: [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2021.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2021.html)
  - Briefing paper which answers the most common questions about the week: [www.mhfi.org/mhw2021toolbox.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw2021toolbox.pdf)
  - Men's Health Week posters and images: [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html)

- Latest developments: [www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek](https://www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek) and [www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL](https://www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL)

7. Each day of Men's Health Week 2021 will focus upon a specific issue:

- Monday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021: Healthy relationships / staying connected / tackling loneliness
- Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021: Physical health / activity
- Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021: Mental fitness
- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021: Giving to others / volunteering / helping to make a difference
- Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021: The importance of prevention / early detection / healthy lifestyle
- Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2021: Pledge to action day
- Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021: Fathers, fatherhood and males in caring roles

8. 18,000 hard copies of the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual have been given out to men across the island of Ireland this year. 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 PDF preview copy of the Man Manual can be accessed online at: [www.mhfi.org/challenges2021.pdf](https://www.mhfi.org/challenges2021.pdf)

9. The image attached to this Press Release features Paul, Dee, Clara and Cristian from Belfast. They kindly agreed to be the 'face' of Men's Health Week 2021 on the island of Ireland, and to star in all of the promotional materials.

10. For more information on how COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact upon men, visit: [www.mhfi.org/coronavirus.html](https://www.mhfi.org/coronavirus.html)

