



Seeing Depression as a Health Issue FOR MEN

Depression can affect anybody, but it is less likely to be noticed by men or the people around them.

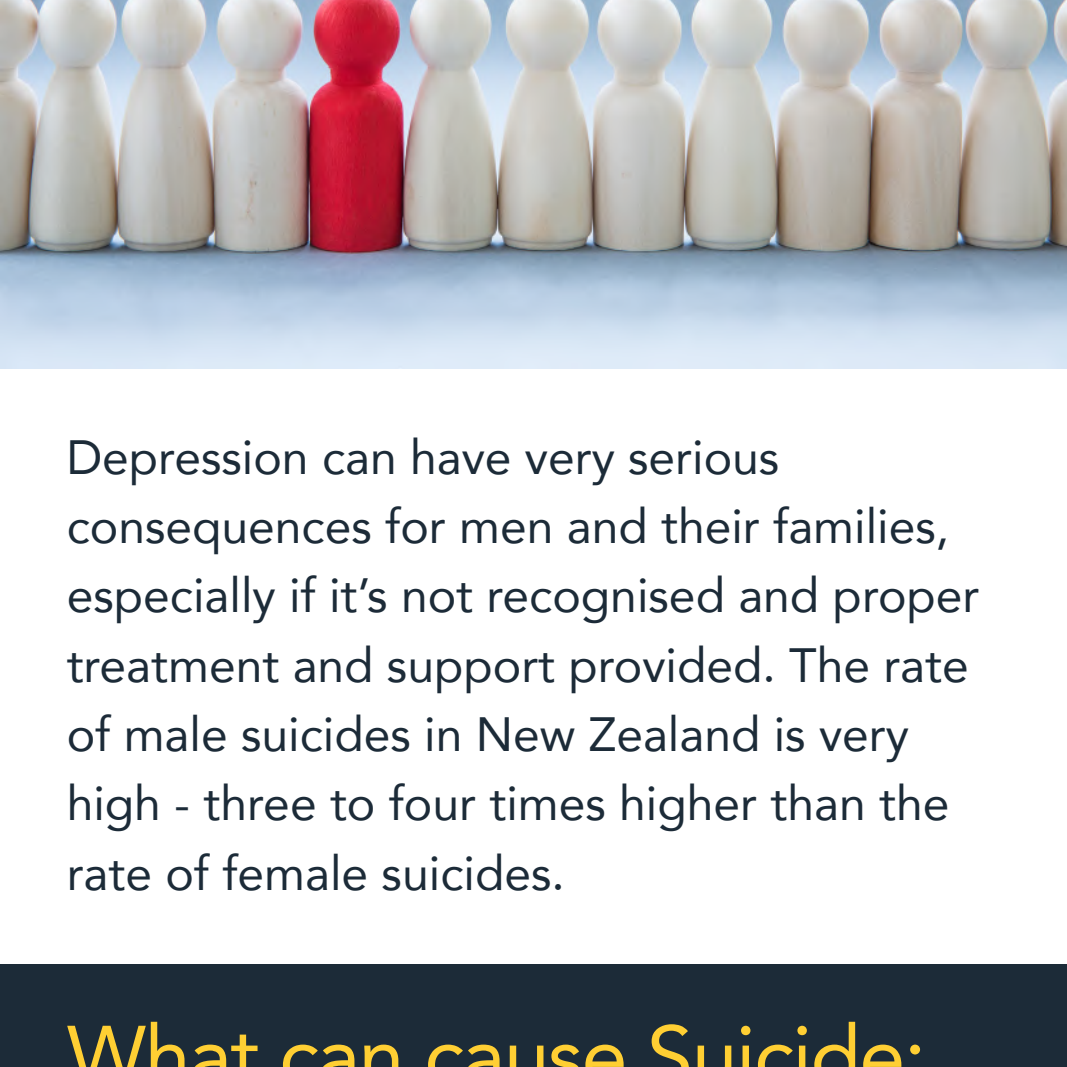
If depression isn't detected, then it can't be treated, and it has the potential to become severe and disabling.

Depression is also a known risk factor for suicide. Although men are more likely than women to recognise the physical symptoms of depression, such as feeling tired and irritable, they are less likely to think of this as depression.

Some men may expect they will always be physically, and mentally strong, and self-reliant, and experiencing depression can be seen as a weakness rather than a common health issue.

Men generally tend to put off getting help for health problems, and this is probably even more so for mental health issues. They think they should be able to handle the problems themselves or 'harden up' and get over it. Unfortunately, a lot of men manage their symptoms by using too much alcohol, or recreational drugs, which make the symptoms worse.

Depression is very common – over our lifetimes, one in eight men, and one in five women will experience an episode of major depressive disorder in New Zealand. Many more will experience less severe forms of depression, which will nevertheless have negative impacts on their lives and the lives of those around them.



Depression can have very serious consequences for men and their families, especially if it's not recognised and proper treatment and support provided. The rate of male suicides in New Zealand is very high - three to four times higher than the rate of female suicides.

What can cause Suicide:

- Dependency on recreational drugs and alcohol.
- Chronic physical health problems.
- Relationship/family difficulties and conflict.
- Major life changes, including becoming a father.
- Employment problems, unemployment (especially long term).
- Financial problems.
- Social isolation.
- Separation and divorce.

Men and depression

The warning signs a person may be depressed if they have felt sad and miserable most of the time, or lost interest and pleasure in their usual activities for more than two weeks. While different people have different combinations of other symptoms of depression.

Here are the common symptoms that help in recognizing depression in men.

- Withdrawing from family, friends, and activities.
- Becoming restless, unmotivated, or generally slowing down.
- Inability to find pleasure in activities that are usually enjoyed.
- Moodiness or irritability – which can sometimes come across as aggression.



- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or emptiness.
- Losing self-confidence, feeling like a failure.
- Suicidal thoughts.
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Feeling tired all the time.
- Unexplained headaches, backaches, or other physical pain.
- Digestive upsets, nausea, changes in bowel habits.
- Significant changes in appetite, and/or weight loss or gain.

If you are concerned that you or someone you care about might be depressed, it's important to get help. Untreated depression can become more severe. It can be hard for men to acknowledge that they have a mental health problem, so they may need some support to get the help they need.

How you can help:

Being depressed and anxious can be a lonely experience. Sometimes the most important thing is having supportive people around or checking in. Having a coffee, watching television, phoning, or texting to say 'Hi' can help a lot. When you're feeling down, knowing that people are thinking of you can lift your spirits.

Often when people are feeling bad, they don't want to go out and do anything. Everything feels just too hard. So, encouraging them to do something with you is great support. It could be something small like watching funny video clips, listening to music, going for a walk.

For more information and fact, sheets visit www.depression.org.nz

If you want to talk to someone who can help: Call the Depression Helpline on **0800 111 757**

Call **Mensline** on **0800 636 754**

Text The **Lowdown** team for free on **5626**

Or talk to your doctor