



## FACT SHEET:

# Coping with Depression

## Men and Depression

Men, in general, believe they have to be strong and in control of their emotions at all times. This leaves little room for feelings such as hopelessness, helplessness or despair when life is tough. Men will often label such feelings as weak or unmanly.

It's normal for you or anyone to feel down from time to time. Dips in mood are normal reactions to losses, setbacks or disappointments in life. However, if intense, prolonged feelings of despair and hopelessness take hold and interfere with relationships with family and friends, impact on your work performance and your day-to-day life, you may be suffering from depression.

Depression is common in men. It's not a sign of emotional weakness or failing masculinity. It's a treatable condition that affects millions of men worldwide of all ages and backgrounds.

## Men's Experience of Depression

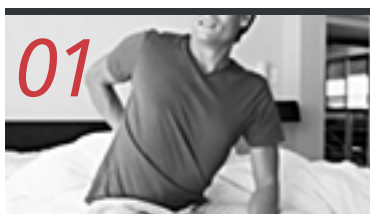
There can be a mixture of psychological, social and biological triggers contributing to depression in men. These could include:

- Overwhelming stress at work
- Relationship difficulties
- Losing or changing jobs
- Constant financial problems
- Health problems such as chronic illness, injury or disability
- Death of a loved one
- Retirement; loss of independence
- Family responsibilities such as caring for children, spouse or aging parents

Men may develop the standard symptoms of depression such as:

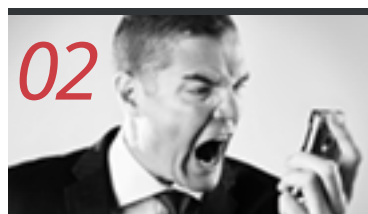
- Become sad and withdrawn
- Lose interest in friends and activities they used to enjoy
- Remain irritable and aggressive
- Compulsively work
- Drink more than usual
- Engage in high-risk activities, including dangerous driving, gambling, drug taking, unsafe sex

## 3 Common Signs of Depression in Men



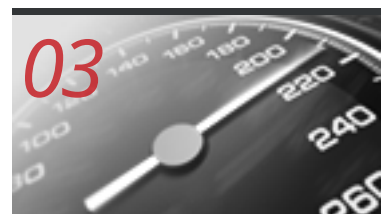
### PHYSICAL PAIN

Physical symptoms (such as backache, frequent headaches, sleep problems, sexual dysfunction, or digestive disorders) that don't respond to normal treatment.



### ANGER

This could range from irritability, sensitivity to criticism, or a loss of sense of humour to road rage, a short temper, or even violence. Some men become controlling or verbally/physically abusive to partners, children, or other loved ones.



### RECKLESS BEHAVIOUR

This may include exhibiting escapist or risky behaviour like pursuing dangerous sports, driving recklessly, or engaging in unsafe sex. Men might drink too much, abuse drugs, or gamble compulsively.

# Differences Between Men and Women

The following table describes how men and women experience depression differently.

Women tend to:	Men tend to:
Blame themselves	Blame others
Feel sad, apathetic, and worthless	Feel angry, irritable, and ego inflated
Feel anxious and scared	Feel suspicious and guarded
Avoid conflicts at all costs	Create conflicts
Feel slowed down and nervous	Feel restless and agitated
Have trouble setting boundaries	Need to feel in control at all costs
Find it easy to talk about self-doubt and despair	Find it "weak" to admit self-doubt or despair
Use food, friends, and "love" to self-medicate	Use alcohol, TV, sports, and sex to self-medicate

\* Adapted from: *Male Menopause* by Jed Diamond

## Treating Depression

One of the most important things for men is to not tough it out alone. There is plenty of help and advice available. The first step is to speak to a trusted friend, spouse or family member, or your doctor. The next step is to try one, or a combination, of the following:

### THERAPY

Talking with a therapist or counsellor is an extremely effective treatment for depression often giving a rapid sense of relief even to the most skeptical man.

### MEDICATION

Medication may relieve symptoms but rarely deals with underlying problems. There are also side effects to anti-depressants. Always consult a trained doctor when discussing medication options.

### LIFESTYLE

Changes in lifestyle can lift depression and keep it at bay. This can include:

**Exercise** – Regular exercise boosts serotonin, endorphins and other good brain chemicals to trigger growth in brain cells, similar to anti-depressants.

**Diet** – Eating small well-balanced meals throughout the day will help stabilize mood swings. Consult a dietician or nutritionist for more advice regarding the relationship between your emotions and food cravings.

**Sleep** – Deprived sleep exacerbates anger, irritability and moodiness. Aim for 7-9 hours each night.

**Stress** – Look for ways to minimize stress. Therapy or counselling are powerful processes in which to learn how to better manage stress in your life.

**Social** – Allow family or friends to help you. Accepting support from people who care about you is a sign of strength. Close relationships are vital to help you get through. Also try and resist retreating away into isolation and participate in social events even if you don't always feel like it.

## Fast Facts

- ✓ Depression is common in men
- ✓ Depression isn't a sign of emotional weakness or failing masculinity
- ✓ Depression is a treatable condition
- ✓ Depression in men may result in physical pain, anger or reckless behaviour
- ✓ Depression responds well to therapy, medication or lifestyle changes



Men & Relationships Counselling

Helping you make change a reality

☎ 1 300 88 45 22

🌐 [menandrelationships.com.au](http://menandrelationships.com.au)