

# Men's Health Week 2015



## The Toolbox for Action



MEN'S HEALTH WEEK

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# Men's Health Week 2015

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## 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 15<sup>th</sup> until Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2015.

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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 2015 on the island of Ireland is: *'Creating Culture Change - it's time for a new script'*.

This is different to the theme in England and Wales - which focuses upon healthy living.

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## Why choose the theme 'Creating Culture Change' for 2015?

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 been done 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 a model for improving aspects of men's health ... Much has been achieved, but there is room for more.

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.

*'It's time for a new script'* which re-defines how men look after their health, as well as how they can be actively supported to do so. This requires focusing upon *'creating culture change'* in Ireland which views men's health as being everyone's business. MHW 2015 offers a launch pad to do this.

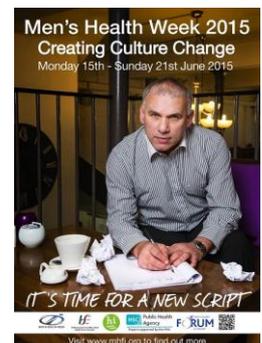
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## What were the themes for MHW in previous years?

Previous MHWs in Ireland have focused upon ...

- 2005 - Obesity
- 2006 - Mental Well-Being
- 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?



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## Who is the target audience?

The purpose of MHW is to draw attention to the health and well-being 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, 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 2015. The focus for this year (i.e. 'Creating Culture Change - it's time for a new script') 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 2015 can be found online at: [www.mhfi.org/mhw2015celebrateit.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw2015celebrateit.pdf) These suggestions range from the simple and free, to large-scale and expensive!

You could also consider helping to give out the new, free, 32 page 'Challenges and Choices' mini-manual for men (see [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2015.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2015.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 2015 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-up a poster and/or sending the postcards to people you know.
- Advertising MHW on your own website.
- Creating a link from your website to the MHW 2015 web page ([www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2015.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2015.html)).
- Sending an email to everyone in your contacts list about Men's Health Week and asking them to forward the message.
- Inserting the MHW logo ([www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html)) into your outgoing emails.
- 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 the link to all your friends.
- Including information about MHW in your mailouts / newsletters.
- Telling others about what is happening in your area during MHW by posting details on the MHW website ([www.mhfi.org/mhw/promote-an-event.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/promote-an-event.html)).
- Reminding your colleagues to follow all the latest MHW news on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL](http://www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL)).
- Tweeting about MHW 2015, and including #CreatingCultureChange in your tweet.
- Encouraging the men you know to get involved in some of the activities taking place around the country ...

Doing one or more of these simple (and cost-free) things would contribute hugely to MHW 2015!

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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 we make the right choices. 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 was the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual (see [www.mhfi.org/challenges.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/challenges.pdf)) 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.



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 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 2015, a further 10,000 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 and the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland.

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## Who is the Men's Health Week 'Poster Boy' for 2015?

Former international rugby player Tony Ward (Irish sporting legend, prostate cancer sufferer, and champion of men's health) will be acting as the 'face' of Men's Health Week 2015 in Ireland, when he stars in a nationwide poster campaign. He will also appear on the cover of the free, 32 page 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual which will be given to men across the island of Ireland.



Tony - now a sports journalist (Irish Independent), rugby coach, rugby commentator (RTE) and Ambassador for the Heartbeat Trust (raising awareness of heart failure and associated prevention strategies) - is, undoubtedly, a legend on the island of Ireland. However, he is also a man who has faced a personal battle against prostate cancer and, in recent years, has been prepared to share his story publicly with others in order to create a culture change in how men look after their health.

Tony was an Irish Rugby Union and soccer player during the 1970s and 1980s. He played rugby as a Fly-Half for, amongst others, Munster, Leinster, Ireland, the British and Irish Lions, and the Barbarians. He was selected as the 1979 European Rugby Player of the Year, and was the first ever recipient of this title.

In 1978, Tony played a key role in Munster's legendary victory over New Zealand at Thomond Park - when he scored two drop goals and a conversion in a 12-0 victory. To date, Munster is the only Irish team ever to beat the All-Blacks. He also won 19 caps for Ireland between 1978 and 1987, and made his international debut against Scotland at Lansdowne Road aged 23. He helped Ireland win 12-9 and, during the 1978 Five Nations Championship, scored 38 points - a record for a debutant.

Tony also played football for both Shamrock Rovers and Limerick United. In his last season with Rovers in 1974/75, he scored six league goals. In 1981, he played for Limerick United in the UEFA Cup and, in 1982, helped them to win the FAI Cup.

In relation to his role in Men's Health Week 2015, Tony comments:

*"Men's Health Week gives everyone an opportunity to do something positive and practical to improve the health of men and boys in Ireland. I know, from personal experience, that men certainly need to pay more attention to their health and to act quickly when they suspect something may be wrong. However, we live in a culture which expects men to keep their chin up and to soldier on through difficult times. This needs to change. It's definitely time for a new script".*

[A big 'thank you' to Belfast Tea and Coffee Company on Royal Avenue, Belfast, for allowing us to use their cafe for the poster photo-shoot]

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## Who has planned Men's Health Week 2015 in Ireland?

MHW in Ireland has been planned by a broad range of partners who contributed to an inter-agency Planning Group. This body met, and had ongoing communication with each other, between November 2014 and April 2015. It 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.

The planning process for 2015 drew upon the insight, expertise, support and contacts of 44 diverse organisations (voluntary, community, statutory and academic sectors as well as men's groups) from across the whole of Ireland.

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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 well being 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 2015, contact ...

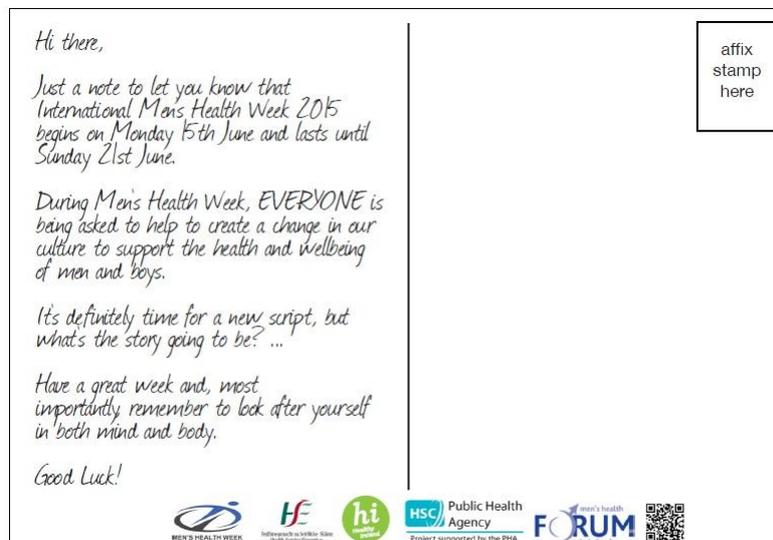
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or visit ...

Website: [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2015.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2015.html)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek](https://www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek)  
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MensHealthIRL>

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Text side of MHW 2015 Postcard