

## **What's your 'MISSION: isPOSSIBLE?'** **- the Men's Health Forum in Ireland challenges everyone to accept a mission during Men's Health Week 2022**

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Everyone on the island of Ireland is being urged to take action to improve the health of men and boys by identifying and accepting a practical and realistic health improvement 'mission'. That's the call from the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) as the final countdown to International Men's Health Week begins.

Running from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June to Sunday 19<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.

In recent years, a broad range of research has highlighted the challenges which face males in Ireland and further afield. Many of the key statistics, crystallised in the 'Men's Health in Numbers' publications, show that ...

- Local men continue to die, on average, younger than women do.
- Poor lifestyles (including smoking, drinking, diet and lack of exercise) are responsible for a large proportion of chronic diseases.
- Males have higher death rates than women for almost all of the leading causes of death, and at all ages.
- Men's mental health needs are often under the radar and remain unmet.
- Late presentation to health services can lead to a number of problems becoming untreatable ...

Dr Noel Richardson, Director of the National Centre for Men's Health in South East Technological University, reflects:

*"However, this is not a 'lost cause', and this situation can be improved in many significant ways. For me, the key message for Men's Health Week is that small things can really make a difference - whether it's going for a walk, taking time out, re-connecting with a friend. It's about doing something positive for yourself and building momentum towards positive change, one step at a time."*

Almost everyone has heard of the 'MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE' franchise. Each episode / film starts in the same way, with an invitation: 'your mission, should you choose to accept it, is ...' During Men's Health Week 2022, men and boys on the island of Ireland are also being asked to step up and to accept their own personal health challenge.

Men's Health Week this year takes place in the context of an easing of the constraints introduced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Worldwide, this virus had a major impact upon men's health, as well as their wider lives. It placed a myriad of restrictions upon everyone.

However, Men's Health Week 2022 seeks to reverse this trend, and focuses upon what we can do to take back control of our own health. All too often we set ourselves unrealistic targets. Therefore, this year, everyone is asked to focus upon small, simple and practical things to improve their health, for example:

- Read the free Men's Health Week 'Man Manual' at: [www.mhfi.org/challenges2022.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/challenges2022.pdf)
- Find out about the opening hours at their local GP surgery and visit them if they have any concerns regarding their health.
- Make at least one journey by foot or bicycle each day instead of going by car.
- Try some fruit or vegetables they've never tasted before or think they don't like.
- Re-connect with family and friends.
- Join a group or take up a sport.
- Find a friend to quit smoking with and seek advice on how to stop.
- Get their blood pressure checked.
- Reflect on their own mental fitness ...

Paul Ferris, Men's Health Week 2022 Ambassador, ex-professional footballer with Newcastle United, and award winning author, comments:

*From my personal experience of living with health and wellbeing issues, I appreciate that men and boys need both opportunities to improve their health, as well as support to do so. Men's Health Week offers an ideal time to focus our attention upon the needs of males, and to make a positive and meaningful difference to their lives.*

*We all need to commit to realistic missions which will improve both our own health and the health of males generally. Everyone has a part to play in achieving this."*

**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 provide an up-to-date and comprehensive overview of key statistics on men's health on the island of Ireland. They 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. International Men's Health Week always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. During 2022, it will run from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> until Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June.
4. The overarching 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.
5. During 2022, the theme for Ireland is 'MISSION: isPOSSIBLE' and the call to men (and those who support the health of men) is 'the action starts with you'.
6. Men's Health Week is celebrated across Europe, the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and in many other countries.
7. On the island of Ireland, Men's Health Week is coordinated by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland, with support from over 95 partner organisations.
8. 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.
9. Financial support for the week was received from Health Service Executive Health and Wellbeing, Healthy Ireland within the Department of Health, and the Public Health Agency.
10. Key information on Men's Health Week on the island of Ireland is available online ...
  - Full overview of Men's Health Week 2022: [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2022.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2022.html)
  - Men's Health Week posters and images: [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html)

- Briefing paper which answers the most common questions about the week: [www.mhfi.org/mhw2022toolbox.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw2022toolbox.pdf)
  - Latest developments: [www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek](https://www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek) and [www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL](https://www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL)
11. Each day of Men's Health Week 2022 will focus upon a specific issue:
- Monday 13th June: Mental fitness
  - Tuesday 14th June: Prevention is better than cure
  - Wednesday 15th June: Food for thought
  - Thursday 16th June: Rethink your drink
  - Friday 17th June: Trash the ash
  - Saturday 18th June: Let's get physical - be more than a sports spectator
  - Sunday 19th June: Fathers - can make wonderful things possible for their kids
12. 25,000 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/challenges2022.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/challenges2022.pdf)
13. The social media hashtags for the week are: #MensHealthWeek and #MissionIsPossible
14. There are two high profile 'Ambassadors' for Men's Health Week this year ...
- PAUL FERRIS:** Paul, from Northern Ireland, was a teenage prodigy, becoming Newcastle United's youngest-ever player in 1982 - only for injury to ensure his promise went unfulfilled. He later returned to the club as a physiotherapist, before earning a Master's degree and qualifying as a barrister. But the lure of football was always strong, and he went back for a third spell at Newcastle, as Head of the Medical Department - again working closely with a host of big-name players and managers. Paul also became a novelist, and his memoir, 'The Boy on the Shed', was published in 2018 to positive acclaim. It became an instant bestseller and won multiple literary awards, including being voted The Times and The Sunday Times Sports Book of the Year. It was also named The Sports Autobiography of the Year at the British Sports Book Awards in 2019. 'The Magic in the Tin' (a follow-up to The Boy on the Shed) has recently been published. Both books focus heavily upon the personal challenges Paul has experienced in his life (including prostate cancer) and how he has worked to overcome these.
- DR NOEL RICHARDSON:** Noel is the Director of the National Centre for Men's Health in South East Technological University and has been part of the HSE's Health and Wellbeing Division since 2005. He has extensive experience in the area of men's health at a research, policy and advocacy level. Noel was the principal author of Ireland's National Men's Health Policy (2009) and co-author of the first European Union Report on Men's Health (2011). He also collaborated on the WHO European Region Men's Health Report and Men's Health Strategy (2018). He has published a broad range of research reports and academic papers in the area of men's health. His current research interests include: monitoring the impact of policy and capacity building measures in men's health; men, masculinities and mental health; and health promotion interventions targeted at 'hard to reach' groups of men in community and workplace settings.