

New Report Cards on men's health say 'there is still room for improvement' - but do you know your numbers?

At school, every pupil is told that you need to know your numbers if you are to get on in life. This message is usually not welcomed at the time, but it's a solid piece of advice. During International Men's Health Week 2024, everyone is, once again, being asked to 'Know Your Numbers' - but, this time, these are numbers that could save your life.

[Men's Health Week](#) (Monday 10th June to Sunday 16th June 2024) offers an ideal opportunity 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. This is the perfect time for everyone to commit to simple, practical and realistic actions to improve their health and live a longer life. However, to do this, we all need to know the challenges that we face.

Men's Health Week this year will focus upon three types of numbers:

- [Statistics](#) on the state of men's health that policy makers and service providers need to know if they are to address the issues facing men and boys.
- [Key numbers](#) that men, themselves, need to know, to take control over some elements of their own health.
- Contact numbers for [help and support services](#) that everyone needs to know at times of difficulty or crisis.

To support and inform the week, the Men's Health Forum in Ireland has just launched a number of new publications:

- Two 'Men's Health Report Cards' - one focusing upon the [Republic of Ireland](#) and one upon [Northern Ireland](#). These shine a light upon the 'big picture' of men's health on the island of Ireland, and offer easy-to-understand key statistics in an infographic format.
- A '[Do You Know Your Numbers](#)' z-card for men themselves, which highlights a range of key numbers that all men need to be aware of in relation to their personal health.

Colin Fowler, Director of Operations for the Men's Health Forum in Ireland comments:

"The statistics in the Report Cards provide some cause for optimism, along with some grounds for concern. So, there is still room for improvement."

The four main causes of death among local males continue to be neoplasms, circulatory system diseases, respiratory system diseases, and external causes of injury and poisoning. That said, it is important to note that death rates from these have often been reduced due to factors such as the adoption of healthier lifestyles, the uptake of screening programmes, better diagnostic tools, improvements in health literacy and help-seeking behaviours, availability of support services, and more effective treatments.

Yet, excessive alcohol use remains high. Too many males are overweight. The number of males diagnosed with gonorrhoea has increased. Many boys under-achieve in education. At the same time, the mortality rate for all invasive cancers (excluding NMSC) has fallen and the survival rate has increased. There are fewer male smokers. The number of male suicides has fallen. Healthy life expectancy for males has increased.”

Yet, overall, the numbers show that local men suffer a disproportionate burden of ill health and:

- They continue to die younger than women do.
- Poor lifestyles (including smoking, drinking, diet and lack of physical activity) 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 in the future ...

But this is not a lost cause, and much can be done to change this situation. To support men, an updated '[Action Man](#)' Manual has been produced - in both hard copy and as an online download. During Men’s Health Week 2024, males are encouraged to get a copy of this free booklet, which has been written specifically for men in all parts of Ireland.

The 'Action Man: ten top tips for men's health' manual doesn't preach or lecture, it simply explains:

- WHY an action is needed.
- WHAT can be done about it.
- HOW to find support if you need it.



Finian Murray, Senior Health Promotion and Improvement Officer in the HSE, and one of the authors of the Man Manual, explains:

“The ten top tips put men into the driving seat, and give them the tools and DIY instructions to make positive changes - if they choose to be their own ‘Action Man’. It starts with a clear warning: reading this booklet could seriously improve your health.

During Men’s Health Week 2024, everyone is being asked to ‘Know Your Numbers’ because men’s health counts.”

Men’s Health Week has been planned by almost one hundred partner organisations across the island of Ireland, and thousands of events - both large and small - have been arranged to celebrate this occasion.

Colin Fowler concludes:

“We all need to know our numbers. Policy makers need to know the breadth of the health issues facing men and boys. Men, themselves, need to have clear targets to work towards. Everyone needs to know where to turn to for advice and support in times of difficulty.

However, on its own, this is not enough. We also need to take action - to make health services more male-friendly, arrange that overdue medical check-up, move more, eat more colour in our diet, sleep better, make time for our friends, cut down on alcohol, give up smoking, use the support available ... These small steps will make a huge difference over time, and the best time to start is today.”

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 ...

- Colin Fowler (Belfast), Director of Operations, Men’s Health Forum in Ireland | Mobile: 0044 751 9945261 | Email: colin@mhfi.org
- Finian Murray (Navan), Senior Health Promotion and Improvement Officer for Men's Health, HSE | Mobile: 00353 87 2038790 | Email: finianmurray@gmail.com
- Lorcan Brennan (Waterford), Training and Resource Development Manager, Men's Development Network | Mobile: 00353 86 3619884 | Email: lorcan@mensnetwork.ie
- Michael Lynch (Derry / Londonderry), Convenor of Men’s Health West | Mobile: 0044 790 3619511 | Email: admin@c4s.org.uk

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
 - Republic of Ireland Men's Health Report Card - www.mhfi.org/MensHealthInNumbers2.pdf
 - Northern Ireland Men's Health Report Card - www.mhfi.org/MensHealthInNumbers3.pdf
3. The 'Do You Know Your Numbers?' z-card for men is available online at: <https://mhfi.org/MensHealthInNumbers.pdf>
4. International Men's Health Week always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. During 2024, it will run from Monday 10th until Sunday 16th June.
5. 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.
6. During 2024, the key message for the island of Ireland is 'Know Your Numbers - because men's health counts'.
7. Men's Health Week is celebrated across Europe, the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and other countries worldwide.
8. On the island of Ireland, Men's Health Week is coordinated by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland, with support from almost 100 partner organisations.
9. The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (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.
10. 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.
11. Key information on Men's Health Week on the island of Ireland is available online ...
 - Full overview of Men's Health Week 2024: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2024.html
 - Men's Health Week posters and images: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html
 - Briefing paper which answers the most common questions about the week: www.mhfi.org/mhw2024toolbox.pdf
 - Latest events and developments: www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek and www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL
12. Each day of Men's Health Week 2024 will focus upon a specific issue ...

- Monday 10th June: Trash the ash (and save the cash)
- Tuesday 11th June: Prevention is better than cure
- Wednesday 12th June: Food for thought
- Thursday 13th June: Rethink what you drink
- Friday 14th June: Be mind fit
- Saturday 15th June: Let's get physical - be more than a sports spectator
- Sunday 16th June: Father's Day - the important role that fathers play in their children's lives

13. 35,000 hard copies of the 'Action Man - ten top tips for men's health' Man Manual have been given out to men across the island of Ireland in the last three weeks. A PDF copy of the Man Manual can be accessed online at: <https://mhfi.org/ActionMan.pdf> Over 65,000 online copies of the booklet have also been downloaded to date.

14. The social media hashtags for the week are: #MensHealthWeek | #KnowYourNumbers | #MensHealthCounts

15. There are four high profile 'Ambassadors' for Men's Health Week this year ...

- Dr Mark Rowe:** family physician, Honorary Senior Lecturer at the RCSI School of Medicine and Health Sciences, author, podcaster, TedX Speaker and wellness expert.
- Glenn Kaufmann:** a member of the Irish ParaBowls (Lawn Bowling) team, living with a lifelong physical disability, and an advocate for the physical and mental benefits of remaining active and competitive as we age.
- John Wall:** a cancer survivor and men's health campaigner who provides a voice for others who simply need to have their experience heard and understood.
- Steven O'Connell:** founder of the highly successful Football Cooperative - a social enterprise that uses recreational football as 'a hook' to bring men together to increase physical activity and promote mental health and social connection.

The infographic grid contains the following panels:

- Why focus on men?** The average difference in life expectancy between men and women on the island of Ireland is 4 years. However, the difference between rich and poorer men can often be much more than this. It's time for action!
- Food for thought** It is estimated that about 8 out of 10 men in Ireland don't eat enough fruit and vegetables. The recommended daily amount is 57 portions, and you should try to 'eat the rainbow' (a wide variety of colours) whenever you can.
- Let's get physical** All adults should aim for at least 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity physical activity on 5 days a week (or 150 minutes a week). This time can be added up throughout the day in short spurts - at least 10 minutes here and there will still make a real difference.
- >75% Watch your head** The mental health of men and boys on the island of Ireland is often poor. Unfortunately, this is borne out in the figures for suicide each year - which makes account for over three out of four of the deaths. However, these deaths can be avoided if we all do our bit.
- Going up in smoke** Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death on the island of Ireland - with an estimated 7,500 people dying each year from tobacco related diseases. It harms nearly every organ in the human body and is a risk factor for developing many chronic diseases.
- 10.1 It's your shout** It is estimated that the stroke of pure alcohol - per person aged 15+ in Ireland - is approximately 10.1 times per year. This is the equivalent of 54 x 750ml bottles of vodka, or 106 x 750ml bottles of wine, or 412 pints of beer per person per year.
- What a bloody situation** Normal blood pressure is 120 / 80. However, raised blood pressure (hypertension) can contribute to a range of health issues including heart attacks and strokes. It is sometimes called the 'silent killer', because there are often few signs that something is wrong - until it is.
- Get it on 98%** Condoms are 98% effective at preventing pregnancy - if you use them correctly every time you have sex. They also reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It's a no-brainer. For free STI testing visit: <https://sh2.ie> (ROI) | <https://sh24.org.uk> (NI)
- Help yourself** Helpline numbers you need to know... Emergency Services: 999 Samaritans (UK and ROI): Freephone 116 123 Pieta Helpline (ROI): Freephone 1800 247 247 Lifeline (NI): Freephone 0800 908 8000
- Check your bits and bobs** Did you know that 8 out of 10 cancers can be prevented by having a healthier lifestyle and avoiding risk factors? And here's more good news - there are a number of simple and practical steps that every man can take to reduce their cancer risk. Find out about these today.
- Hazardous waist** The amount of weight you carry around your middle can affect your hormones, immune system and increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. Measuring your waist is a good way to check your fat distribution. For men, a waist circumference below 37"/94cm is considered to be low risk. However, there are ethnic differences in this cut-off point.
- All clogged up <5** One of the best ways to prevent strokes or heart attacks is to keep your cholesterol at a healthy level. Cholesterol is a type of fat in your blood. Too much LDL (bad) cholesterol can be harmful. It sticks to the inside of your arteries and makes it harder for blood to flow through them. For most people, the 'Total Cholesterol' measurement should be no more than 5.
- Take a break** Sleep is important for both your physical and your mental health. It helps to reset and recharge your brain and your body. Generally, adult men need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep a night, while boys need more. The ideal amount is around 8 hours.
- Do you know your numbers?** MEN'S HEALTH COUNTS