

# Access

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## Men's Mental Health Matters

Everyone knows that mental health matters for both women and men. However, a big obstacle in awareness and receiving proper treatment is the **stigma** that some men feel. Guys are supposed to be “strong,” and getting help for issues such as depression may be viewed as a sign of “weakness.” Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Did you know that more than **six million men** suffer from depression every year? Unfortunately, male depression often goes underdiagnosed and untreated. **Depression is the most common mental health condition in the world**, but an untold number of men aren't seeking or receiving help. It's time to end the stigma. Increasing public awareness of mental health conditions is the first step. Here are signs of mental health conditions that everyone should be aware of:

### Signs of depression, especially in men

- Angry outbursts and agitation
- Avoiding family and social gatherings
- Trouble managing responsibilities
- Being a workaholic
- Becoming controlling and abusive
- Risky behaviors such as gambling, unsafe sex, driving under the influence
- Feeling sad, guilty, or empty
- Losing interest in hobbies and fun activities
- Trouble concentrating
- Not getting pleasure from activities usually enjoyed
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts



Mental health disorders can also cause **physical symptoms** that men (and women) might ignore. These include:

- Changes in appetite
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Digestive troubles
- Changes in sleep patterns

In addition to depression, mental health issues affecting both men and women include:

- Bipolar Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Schizophrenia

Men who have been to war or experienced traumatic events are at increased risk of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Men who work under very stressful conditions, such as first responders and others in high-stress jobs, are at risk of developing mental health problems.



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## Ignoring Mental Health Can Increase Thoughts of Suicide

Statistics show that men die by suicide at **a rate nearly four times higher than their female counterparts**. Without getting professional help, men's mental health problems tend to worsen and could result in suicide. Studies show that major life transitions, such as becoming unemployed or retirement, can increase a man's risk of depression and/or committing suicide. Men who go through a divorce commonly struggle with severe depression, too. Encouraging more openness about men's mental health issues can help reverse the trend of rising incidents of suicide.

### Reasons why men avoid seeking treatment

According to Mental Health America, some men don't seek treatment because of traditional social norms. Men may feel pressure to "man up" or simply "tough it out." Men might avoid asking for help because they downplay (or even dismiss) their symptoms. They might not seek treatment because they are reluctant to talk to someone about how they are feeling.

### Help is available; please take the first step

If anyone (either male or female) is struggling with feelings of depression or other mental health issues, **help is available**. Getting the correct help and effective treatment starts with recognizing signs of the problem. If you (or someone you love) has mental health concerns, please contact your health care provider. **You are encouraged to reach out to Aurora EAP, too.** EAP counselors are available 24/7 to get the ball rolling, while offering support and referrals to mental health professionals.

## Changing the Face of Men's Health in Movember

In the month of November, men's health, especially men's mental health, comes to the forefront with Movember initiatives. Movember is an annual event that encourages men to grow moustaches to raise awareness of men's health issues, such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and men's suicide. Movember activities look at mental health through a male lens, focusing on prevention, early intervention and health promotion. You can check out Movember activities on many social media platforms.



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