

## How do men experience depression?

There are several signs and symptoms of depression. Not every man who is depressed experiences every symptom – some will only experience some, while others will have many.

Often, men who are depressed may be more aware of symptoms in their body rather than emotional symptoms. You may notice:

- Feeling tired, having no energy
- Feeling irritable, restless or 'on edge'
- Anger and hostility towards others
- Feeling isolated and withdrawing from whānau and friends
- Losing interest in work, family/whānau and things you used to enjoy
- Feeling dejected, empty or numb, often first thing in the morning
- Sleeping difficulties – difficulty getting to sleep, waking too early in the morning, waking through the night or oversleeping
- Headaches, other aches and pains or digestive issues
- Loss of interest in sex or sexual performance
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Feeling guilty about things that have nothing to do with you
- Having problems thinking clearly, concentrating or making decisions; being forgetful
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
- Drinking or using drugs too much
- Risky or reckless behaviour, such as dangerous driving



## Some risk factors for depression in men

Depression is a common experience – many people experience it at times in their lives. You may be more at risk if you live with the following risk factors, but with help and support, you can get better and flourish.

- Having been depressed before
- Having a family/whānau member who has been depressed
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Chronic health problems
- Separation or divorce
- Work stress
- Money worries
- Major life changes such as retirement or unemployment
- For LGBT+ teenagers and young adults, the stresses associated with coming out
- Being lonely

## Resources

The Mental Health Foundation has a range of information on mental health and wellbeing including pamphlets, postcards and CDs available to order from our website: [shop.mentalhealth.org.nz](https://shop.mentalhealth.org.nz)

## Contact us

Resource & Information Service

Phone: 09 623 4812

Email: [info@mentalhealth.org.nz](mailto:info@mentalhealth.org.nz)

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## Find us online

 [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

 [mhfnz](https://www.instagram.com/mhfnz)

 [mentalhealthfoundationNZ](https://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthfoundationNZ)

## Help us to help others

The Mental Health Foundation is a charity and we rely on donations to support our work. Please consider giving us a donation so that we can continue to help others. Options for donation can be found on our website [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

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## Men & Depression



 **Mental Health Foundation**  
mauri tū, mauri ora  
OF NEW ZEALAND  
[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

**Our vision: a society where all people flourish.**

***“I was still functioning – just not as well as I used to. I just felt a bit flat and irritable. I suppose I really didn’t think it was bad enough to do anything about it.”***

### **What is depression?**

Depression/mate pāpouri is a feeling of sadness and hopelessness, or loss of interest and pleasure. It is experienced most of the day, every day, and lasts at least a couple of weeks. Some men may feel angry and irritable rather than sad.

Depression is common and affects all ages, genders, cultures and economic groups.

Depression is a serious health issue that you should attend to. It is not something you can just ‘snap out of’, but it can be successfully treated, and you are entitled to the help you need.

### **What treatment is available?**

Depression can be successfully treated, allowing you to return to living a good life, full of enjoyment.

Treatment is usually a combination of two or more of these:

- Talking therapy, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy and others
- Drug therapy with antidepressants
- Lifestyle changes – diet, exercise and sleep
- Complementary or traditional medicine such as rongoā

### **Why don’t men seek treatment as much?**

While depression is common, men are not diagnosed with it as often as women. Reasons for this include:

- Men may not easily recognise depression as it can present differently (see the back page).
- Men are often focused on being successful and self-reliant and can play down difficulties.
- Some men aren’t so used to talking about their feelings or asking for help and advice.

### **Helping yourself**

As well as seeking treatment, there are some ways to begin helping yourself. Remember that improvement is usually gradual and happens over time, so be patient with yourself.

- Try to tell someone how you feel. Keep trying to reach out to others, e.g. a partner, a close friend.
- Exercise can really help, particularly outdoors.
- Eat more fruit and vegetables
- Keep a regular sleep routine
- Avoid alcohol and drugs – they may make you feel good in the short-term but worse in the long run.
- Do something you enjoy, often. Join a sport, kapa haka, choir or other group activity, or spend time gardening, woodworking or pursuing your art.
- Check your lifestyle: are you working too hard?
- Take a break – try to get away from your normal routine for a few days or even a few hours.
- Use music, yoga, or meditation to help you relax.
- Learn more about depression and use online self-help and learning programmes like [smallsteps.org.nz](http://smallsteps.org.nz) or [justathought.co.nz](http://justathought.co.nz).

***“Once you can recognise depression, with the right support you can find a way through it.”***



### **Getting help**

The best place to start is your GP or Māori hauora/health provider.

Get a check-up to see if there are physical problems or medicines that are affecting how you feel. Your healthcare provider can help you get the tautoko/support and treatment you need.

Other people who can help you find treatment may be:

- Friends or family/whānau
- Religious or spiritual support services
- Your local Citizen’s Advice Bureau
- Marae-based community support services
- Culturally-based community support services
- Work employee assistance programmes (EAP) which are free for employees.

There are also telephone helplines which give you the opportunity to discuss things anonymously. The below all operate 24 hours a day:

Free call or text **1737** to talk with a trained counsellor.

Depression Helpline **0800 111 757** or text 4202

Lifeline **0800 LIFELINE** (0800 543 354) or free text HELP (4357)

Youthline 0800 376 633 or free text 234

***“I was down for ages after we broke up. After a while I knew I was over it and ready to move on, but no matter what I did, the sadness wouldn’t go away.”***