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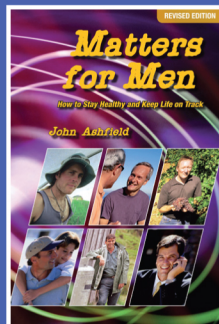
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## Information Leaflets in this series

### Physical Health

- 1 Health Check? – Definitely
- 2 Size Does Matter!
- 3 Right Fuel – Best Performance
- 4 Exercise: How Much?
- 5 Proper Back Care
- 7 Time to Quit Smoking
- 8 Skin Care or Skin Cancer?
- 9 Save Your Bowel
- 10 Prostate: the Facts
- 11 Testicular Matters
- 12 Dreaded STDs
- 13 'Ascension Deficit Disorder'
- 14 Having the Snip
- 15 Growing Old - Staying Dangerous
- 16 High Blood Pressure?
- 17 Heart Disease: Silent Killer
- 18 Stroke: It's Preventable
- 19 Cholesterol Facts
- 20 Diabetes and Penis Removal
- 24 Q Fever Facts

### Mental Health

- 30 Be Sociable – Live Longer
- 32 Personal Problems – Act Now
- 34 Anxiety
- 36 Depression
- 37 Exercise and Depression
- 38 Retirement: Getting it Right
- 39 Depression in Older Men
- 41 Suicidal Thoughts
- 43 Stress
- 44 Men and Grief
- 21 Sleeping Properly
- 22 Shift Work and Sleep
- 25 Work versus Home Life

### Relationships

- 50 Men and Talking
- 53 Single and Dateless
- 54 Men and Relationships
- 55 Problems of Shift Work
- 57 In the Dog-House?
- 60 Surviving Separation
- 61 Succession: A Thorny Issue



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# Depression IN OLDER men



**AIMHS** AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF MALE HEALTH & STUDIES

**INFORMATION LEAFLET 39**

# Old and Grumpy Maybe, but Not Old and Depressed

For men who have reached their senior years, there are often many life events that are cause for feeling miserable and being objectionable – events that younger people are usually little aware of.

Older men may have to contend with: all the adjustments of retiring from the workforce, frustrating physical limitations, temperamental or debilitating health conditions, bereavement, loss and grief, social isolation and perhaps loneliness. Some men also have to contend with the intrusiveness of home care, or leaving their own home and going into a hostel or nursing home. Any of these events can pose a huge challenge emotionally and psychologically. Yet despite what life throws at them, most elderly men cope remarkably well.

Depression is not a normal part of ageing, nor is it generally more common in the elderly than for younger age groups. Risk factors such as loneliness, sickness, or being in care, may trigger depression (though sometimes no trigger is apparent), but depression should never be thought of as the norm.

Symptoms suggesting the possibility of depression should always be explored and properly assessed. Depression is an illness that can have serious consequences if it isn't recognised and treated. It can seriously damage a person's quality of life, and adversely affect their relationships and general health. Severe depression can also be life threatening, and may lead to suicidal thoughts or even suicide. Left untreated, depression may also worsen and last longer.

Depression in elderly men can easily be "masked" or hidden in amongst physical ailments and their effects. Some symptoms of depression like insomnia, changes in appetite, and signs of social withdrawal, though cause for concern in a younger man, are frequently disregarded in elderly men as "just old age". Depression can also be mistaken for age related changes in thinking, or even the early onset of dementia; because in common with these conditions, depression can affect memory and concentration.

Some common symptoms of depression include:

- loss of self-confidence;
- feeling tired all the time;
- sleep disturbance;
- not enjoying usual activities;
- flat mood;
- apathy;
- not eating well or caring about personal appearance;
- withdrawing from family and friends;
- avoiding social events;
- not getting things done that are usually important;
- memory problems and confusion;
- acting out of character;
- irritability;
- anger;
- increased use of alcohol;
- unexplained physical ailments;
- suicidal thoughts.

If you have some symptoms of depression (or someone close to you has), don't wait for them to get worse. It's time for a visit to the doctor. Experiencing suicidal thoughts should be considered serious; help should be sought immediately, by calling a doctor, going to a hospital, or phoning the 24/7 emergency help line on 1300 65 94 67.