

# Male related health aspects/Expert

Men consider themselves to be ill primarily when their physical body is sick. Psychological complaints such as anxiety or depression are still frequently stigmatized and tabooed, especially among male patients. This is shown in the Men's Health Report published in 2013 by the Men's Health Foundation together with the German Health Insurance (DKV).<sup>[1]</sup> The number of mentally ill people is currently rising, especially among men: The proportion of days absent from work due to mental health problems among men has almost doubled in the last ten years (14.7 percent in 2014). Although the prevalence figures for depression and anxiety show a significantly higher percentage of women,<sup>[2]</sup> men are three times more likely than women to commit suicide. The assumption is that the number of undetected mental illnesses is significantly higher in men than in women. Therefore, there seem to be clear deficits in the diagnosis and care of mental illness in men. It is crucial to make this issue more relevant in terms of society, health economics and health policy as soon as possible.<sup>[1]</sup>

The authors speak of "depression blindness" in men, which seems to have various causes. A decisive aspect is that depressive symptoms in men can often manifest themselves in different ways than in women. For example, men who suffer from depression tend to react aggressively, take risks and resort to alcohol and drugs more often. These external symptoms can then mask the "classic" internal symptoms such as feeling depressed, loss of joy or loss of self-esteem. Furthermore, during contact with the physician, male patients often exhibit stereotypical male communication styles. Psychological complaints are often not communicated but are frequently perceived as an expression of personal failure. Likewise, physicians tend to be more authoritarian and less empathetic towards male patients than female patients. Similarly, psychological stress due to occupational stressors is often overlooked in men. The Men's Health Report 2013 shows that men are much more psychologically stressed as a result of their work than women. Moreover, men are confronted with violence more often in their lives (both as perpetrators and as victims). For example, anxiety disorders in men can also manifest themselves in the form of outbreaks of violence and, similar to depression, are often not identified as such. It is also important to focus more attention on the link between physical illness and mental suffering. Mental health care for chronically or acutely ill patients is still not standard practice, especially for men. The consequences are grave: men who are both mentally and physically ill lose an average of 20 years of their lives compared to those who are only physically ill.<sup>[1]</sup>

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## Literature

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1. Weißbach L, Stiehler M. Männergesundheitsbericht 2013: Im Fokus: Psychische Gesundheit. Bern: Hans Huber; 2013.
2. Wittchen H, Jacobi F. Size and burden of mental disorders in Europe--a critical review and appraisal of 27 studies. *European neuropsychopharmacology: the journal of the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology* 2005; 15(4):357-76.

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