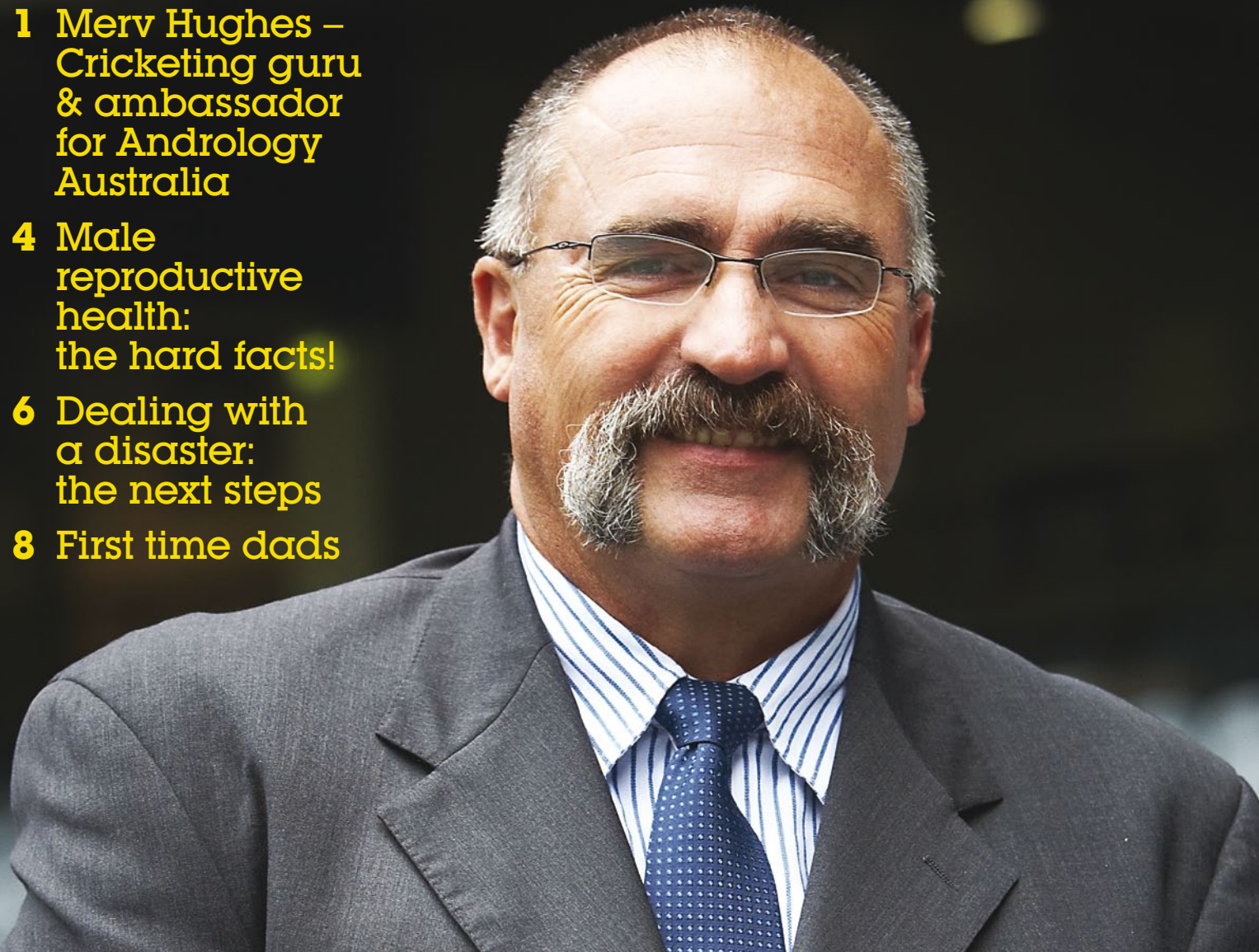


A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME

HEALTH ADVICE FOR
AUSTRALIAN MEN
ISSUE 10 // AUGUST 2009

- 1** Merv Hughes –
Cricketing guru
& ambassador
for Andrology
Australia
- 4** Male
reproductive
health:
the hard facts!
- 6** Dealing with
a disaster:
the next steps
- 8** First time dads





QUESTIONS FOR THE QUACK

with Associate Professor Gary Richardson

Welcome to A Whole New Ball Game. In this edition we look at a number of different issues, one of which is sexual health and wellbeing. We have received a few questions about this, so here are a couple of Q & As that I hope will be helpful for you, or you might like to pass the info on to a mate.

Trent asks: I am 34 and my partner (33) and I want to start a family, but nothing seems to be happening. We have heaps of sex, but it has been 4 months and nothing! What is wrong with us, and where do we go to get help?

This is an important question that I referred on to my colleague Assoc Prof Doug Lording who specializes in this field, and here is his answer to your query.

Starting a family is a very exciting time, and of course in this age of instant gratification, couples often struggle with the inefficiency of human reproduction. The chance of pregnancy in a cycle for a normal couple is about one in four and many normal couples have not achieved pregnancy in 4 months. This does not mean there is anything wrong, and sometimes trying too hard can create its own problems. It is usually recommended that fertility tests are done if pregnancy hasn't occurred in 12 months. However, if there is a history of factors that are likely to interfere with fertility then early assessment is recommended. For instance if the woman has irregular periods, a history of pelvic infection, pelvic pain or abnormal discharge then she should be checked out. Similarly if the man has a testicular disorder such as previous undescended testes, infection, and trauma or has had radiation treatment or chemotherapy then he should have a sperm test to get things moving. Fortunately most couples will conceive naturally, but if not, there are many treatment options available.

Dave 65 asks: Three years back my Doc gave me my first digit test and blood test for the prostate and said all was OK. How often should I have this done and do I need both tests, surely the blood test is enough, who wants to have the finger more than once? There is no history of prostate cancer in my family and apart from being about 12kgs overweight (I'm working on it) I am in good shape.

Great question, and it is important to follow this up with your GP to discuss if or what is the best method of testing in your case. It is difficult to comment on a specific case without knowing all the details, but it is generally recommended, that prostate testing entails a yearly blood test AND rectal examination after the age of 50, and after the age of 40 if there is a family history. The rectal examination (digit test) can pick up tumours that are difficult to detect through the blood test and would otherwise be missed.

Take care of yourself.
Live long and live well.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
GARY RICHARDSON
CHAIRMAN, FOUNDATION 49

LIVE LONG. LIVE WELL.
WWW.49.COM.AU

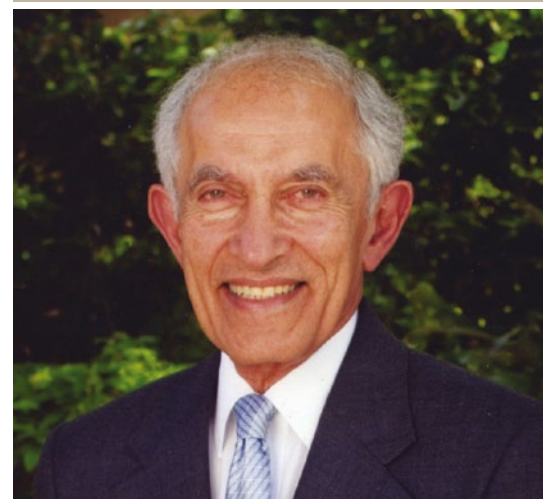
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Foundation 49 is an initiative of Cabrini Health. Thanks to Cabrini for its ongoing support.

This magazine contains general health information and does not take the place of regular medical advice and treatment from a GP. We recommend all men consult a doctor or health professional for a thorough personal examination on a regular basis.

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Merv Hughes

Cricketing guru & ambassador for Andrology Australia



When did you first pick up a cricket ball, or were you more into footy when you were younger?

I was into everything as a youngster: footy in the winter, cricket in the summer, basketball whenever I could. Could never choose between cricket and footy, in fact when I was first picked for Victoria, I was doing pre-season training at Geelong. Billy Goggin said he'd call me after the cricket season. Still waiting...

How hard has it been transitioning out of cricket and into another occupation?

I have still kept a pretty close involvement in cricket with coaching all sorts and selection for under 19 Victoria, then the Australian selection panel. As far as another occupation, I wouldn't call it that – travelling the country telling lies about what a great cricketer I was isn't really a job.

Do you carry any cricket injuries from your glory days?

Knees and shoulders are always bad for fast bowlers in retirement, so I need to keep moving so things don't seize up.

Do you have any health concerns?

Fit as a fiddle, but could always be lighter and faster!

You seem to have an interest in men's health, where did that come from?

I am like most blokes: I reckon I'm bullet proof and when I look in the mirror, I see a lean 25 year old. I got to know John Tickell through *Celebrity Overhaul*, and basically he showed me that I was kidding myself, and showed me what the consequences of the self delusion could be.

Since I started working with Andrology Australia several years ago, I have learnt a lot more about a specific area of the body, men's reproductive health, but the message is the same: don't kid yourself that things haven't changed, look after yourself with exercise and diet... and get someone to check under the bonnet every so often, particularly if you are blowing smoke.

We know from the TV you are really into bran, is there other health stuff that you are in to?

John Tickell reckons to eat as many plants as you can per day, no more than one third of intake should be meat and get as close to the source (i.e. as little processing of the food) as possible.

How do you manage a healthy work/life balance?

Be aware that family is the number one priority, and make sure you check which way the wind is blowing on a regular basis.

What do you do to stay fit and healthy these days?

Walking, stretching, having a good time with the kids, swimming and light weights.

When was the last time you had a check up with your GP?

I have a GP check-up every twelve months.

Have you ever shaved off your famous moustache?

No

What does it mean to be Ambassador for Andrology Australia?

Being an ambassador gives me a great opportunity to get blokes (and their partners) to start talking about their sexual health and to get things checked out particularly if something changes or is concerning. Very often, the problem is a simple one to have solved.

We have just launched the latest initiative to raise awareness of men's health; Merv's Have a Crack Day. On December 11, I'll be joined by 16 registered teams, each including a celebrity player, in a carnival style afternoon of cricket in the beautiful grounds at Xavier College, Melbourne. All the info is at www.mervshaveacrackday.com.au.

For more information on sexual and reproductive health go to pages 4 and 5.



Let's take it to the men!

I know, you have heard it before, but... five men die every hour in Australia from conditions that could have been prevented. So what is Foundation 49's response to this shocking statistic? Not only are we encouraging men to find a GP they feel comfortable talking to, but we are taking health checks to many different locations to provide an opportunity for men to have a quick check.

We have been working in partnership with The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia to improve the health of men in Australia.

Over the past eighteen months Foundation 49 has carried out more than 2000 health checks on Australian men at various trade fairs, sporting and agricultural shows and conventions. With the outstanding support of The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, many of these checks have been provided free of charge to any male who has been prepared to give up 10 minutes of their time! Men complete a short electronic survey covering age specific risks

associated with heart disease, diabetes, mental health and cancer risk, followed by a random cholesterol test. Each man receives a summary of results and a GP referral letter to follow up any health risks that have been identified.

We have been surprised at the willingness of men to participate in the health check program, debunking the myth that men are not interested and do not place much importance on their health. Many of the men who had health checks simply walked into the booth and asked to be checked. Sure there were a number of guys who were persuaded by their female partners, however many of the men came through either on their own, or with their mates.

Some of the men were surprised by the health summary they received. Some were aware of their existing health risks and were checking to see if their health interventions were working. Many others knew that lifestyle changes were required to improve their health, and simply needed some encouragement to follow up with their GP.

Through these checks Foundation 49 is working to make health more accessible to men, by taking information and checks to places where men gather.

Workplace health

Foundation 49 is able to deliver two different health check programs to the workplace. One is called the Decades of Life Workplace Program, and the other is WorkHealth, a Victorian Government initiative.

Decades of Life

Foundation 49 has developed an age specific health check called Decades of Life, which can be delivered in your workplace by trained Foundation 49 nurses. The Decades of Life program consists of an online health survey and physical assessment. The program allows men to focus on the aspects of their health that are of greatest concern to them.

Foundation 49 has delivered the Decades of Life program to a number of organisations across Victoria including The Victoria Police, Fosters and the Cabrini Linen Service, and at the time of print we are delivering the program to Zoo's Victoria and staff of GSK Victoria.

The areas covered in the Decades of Life health assessment include mental health, cancer risk, cardiovascular risk, lifestyle risk factors and family history.

A number of common themes and findings have emerged through the workplace checks:

1. Once you engage male staff about their health they are eager to participate and learn more about their health
2. Men often joke about their health, but are great at providing support to mates who need to look at themselves and make some changes for example cut back on alcohol or increase the amount of exercise they are getting
3. Health checks such as this paid for by their employer are worthwhile and as such encourages a real sense of appreciation and good will towards their employer

Foundation 49 can tailor a Decades of Life program to suit the needs of your workplace, and it can be incorporated into a health week with different activities such as pedometer challenges and talks. If you would like to discuss how we can deliver a workplace program call us on (03) 9508 1567 or go to our website at www.49.com.au

WorkHealth

WorkHealth is a Victorian State Government initiative aimed at providing worker health checks directly into Victorian workplaces. The health checks are designed to identify individuals at risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease through the use of a brief questionnaire and random blood measures including cholesterol and glucose readings, and a body mass index measure.

The health checks are delivered by external service providers who have undergone an endorsement process designed by WorkSafe Victoria. This will ensure that the highest standards are maintained throughout the program, including consistency across all service providers, adherence to strict confidentiality protocols and excellence in clinical delivery of physical assessments. Foundation 49 has been accredited as a provider of this program.

Depending on the size of your workplace, WorkSafe will either subsidise the complete or partial cost of running this program. For more information go to the WorkHealth website at www.workhealth.vic.gov.au

Foundation 49 is proud to be an endorsed service provider for WorkHealth. If you would like us to deliver this program in your workplace, please contact Foundation 49 on (03) 9508 1567.

Safety and wellbeing programs can bring a range of benefits:

For workers, the personal benefits of participating in workplace health programs can include:

- improved health awareness and knowledge
- improved physical and mental health
- increased energy to do the things you want to do
- increased enjoyment of work
- improved concentration and productivity

For employers, the benefits of providing workplace health programs are likely to include:

- improved productivity
- improved staff morale
- reduced absenteeism
- reduced presenteeism (remaining at work when unwell)
- reduced staff turnover
- reduced workplace injuries
- improved worker relations
- maintaining the skills and experience of ageing workers

Male reproductive health: the hard facts!

Professor Rob McLachlan, Director of Andrology Australia says that there is a strong link between male reproductive health and chronic diseases; making it even more important for men to seek help from their doctor early and to openly discuss their reproductive health problem as it could help in diagnosing other more serious health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

“Male reproductive health disorders are common. One in three men over the age of 40 years is affected by a reproductive health disorder, and such disorders become even more common as age increases.”

“By talking to a middle aged or older man about his erectile function, doctors can use this as a sign to investigate whether any underlying serious health problems may exist.”

Professor McLachlan says that like any health concern affecting other parts of the body, when things go wrong with the male reproductive system, it's important to see your doctor.

“Knowing that male reproductive health problems are common is important for men to appreciate that they are ‘not alone’ when seeking help or advice for their health concerns” says Professor McLachlan. “Over the past four years, Merv Hughes, Ambassador to Andrology Australia, has been reinforcing this message at community events and helping to motivate men to make health a priority for the benefits it brings to all aspects of their lives” he says.

What are the most common reproductive problems men may experience?

There has been growing interest in men's health in Australia over recent years with recognition of men's shorter life expectancy and higher risk of more serious health problems; such as cardiovascular disease, when compared to the health of females. Interest in male reproductive health has also increased with greater media coverage on male specific health issues; such as prostate cancer and erectile dysfunction. However, many men are still unaware of ‘what problems are common’, and ‘who to see’ and ‘what to do’ when a reproductive problem arises.

The most common reproductive health problems in Australian men are:

Erectile dysfunction

Sexual disorders in men are more common than you might imagine. In Australia, one in five men over the age of 40 years experience significant erectile problems (or impotence). Men with diabetes are approximately twice as likely to experience erectile problems.

It is important to determine the cause of the problem prior to deciding on treatment. Even if the cause of the problem is purely a physical one (as opposed to psychological: performance pressure, stress, anxiety), gaining some psychological support is an essential part of treatment.

There are many treatments available for erectile dysfunction (including medication) but talking to your partner and your doctor is the most important first step.

Prostate enlargement

Although most common in older men, about half of all Australian men will experience prostate problems. The most common disease is a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate called Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH). While usually not life-threatening, BPH can make urination difficult and life uncomfortable. Both surgical treatments and medications are available to ease the symptoms of prostate disease. However, not all urinary problems are caused by the prostate, so it's important to see your doctor.

Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is very common and about 18,000 men in Australia are diagnosed with it every year. Men who have a family history of prostate cancer are at greater risk. These men and others who are concerned about prostate cancer should talk to their doctor about testing by rectal examination and a blood test called the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test. There is much debate about the PSA test for diagnosis of prostate cancer, so before choosing whether or not to have the test you should first discuss it with your doctor; to understand all the benefits and risks of testing. Treatments for prostate cancer include surgery, radiation therapy and 'watchful waiting' (or 'active surveillance'), which means to keep a close eye on things through regular blood tests and visits to the doctor.

Infertility

Men are often shocked to find out that difficulties in having a baby are due to problems on their part. But, in fact, around one in twenty men in Australia are infertile. Male infertility can have many causes, but problems with the quantity or quality of sperm produced are among the most common. Male infertility can be a very difficult condition for men to deal with: men can become stressed, frustrated and feel that it is very unfair, particularly as in nearly half of cases, doctors can find no reason for poor sperm production. In some men, genetic causes (such as Klinefelter's Syndrome) may be the reason for infertility and for some men who seek fertility treatment, this may be the first time they become aware of a genetic condition. Fortunately, some of the problems that cause infertility can be treated, and should be investigated by a doctor.

Testicular cancer

Testicular cancer is the second most common cancer in men aged from 18 to 39, but it is easy to treat and with early detection the cure rate is over 95 per cent. Men who had undescended testes as a child or have infertility problems are at greater risk of testicular cancer. A hard, painless lump in the testicle is the most common symptom, but the testicle may also feel painful and tender. In a few men, constant backache, coughing or breathlessness, and enlarged or tender breasts can mean the cancer has spread. Surgical removal of the affected testicle is the first treatment for all testicular cancer. However, this treatment does not normally affect sexual or erectile function.

Testosterone deficiency

Decreased energy, mood swings, irritability, poor concentration, reduced muscle strength or a lack of interest in sex may indicate low testosterone levels. One in 200 men in Australia suffer from testosterone deficiency.

Sometimes incorrectly referred to as 'male menopause', testosterone deficiency doesn't affect all men, but can affect men of all ages. Testosterone deficiency can be caused by a genetic or medical problem, by damage to the testes, or simply be part of the ageing process. In some older men, testosterone levels fall to a level at which treatment is needed. Testosterone deficiency can only be diagnosed by a doctor, who can provide treatment in the form of injections, implants, capsules or patches.

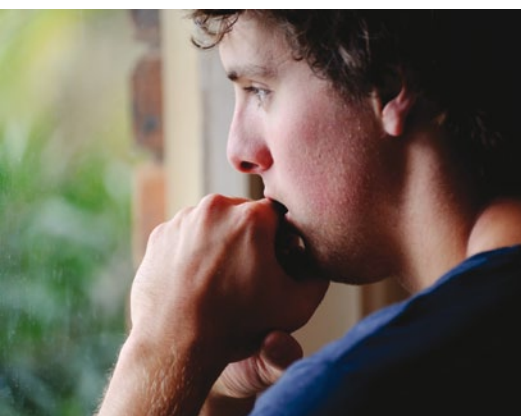
Where can I get help and how do I find out more about my condition?

Many men who have a reproductive health problem try to find out more information about their health condition before they visit the doctor. While the most important step is to visit the doctor as soon as possible, it can also be helpful to have access to easy to read and evidence-based information and resources.

Andrology Australia is a national educational program that provides evidence-based information and resources to the community and to health professionals at no cost to raise awareness of men's reproductive health and associated conditions.

Andrology Australia provides the range of resources to encourage men and their families to speak to their doctor, and to help men understand their bodies and what it means when problems arise.

Information and resources are available at no cost on male reproductive health problems, and can be downloaded or ordered online at www.andrologyaustralia.org or by phone: 1300 303 878.



Male reproductive health problems are common and can impact your overall health and quality of life. Conditions, such as erectile dysfunction, may also be an early warning sign for more serious chronic diseases (such as diabetes or heart disease) so it is important to seek medical advice.

There is help available. Talk to your doctor and visit www.andrologyaustralia.org for more information on men's health.

Dealing with a disaster: the next steps

In Australia, about 65 per cent of men and 50 per cent of women will witness or endure a traumatic event at some point in their life. The human mind is resilient and many people will recover unscathed without the need for professional help.

However, around 8 per cent of Australians will develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at some stage in their lives. More than 200,000 people experience PTSD each year. Up to 5 per cent of men currently live with the illness.

After a disaster, the chances of developing PTSD and other mental health problems increases, there is also an increase in substance use problems. Associate Professor Michael Baigent, a psychiatrist and Clinical Adviser to *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, explains common reactions people experience after disasters.

What short-term reactions can people have after they have been through a disaster?

A range of intense symptoms can be experienced immediately after a major disaster or a trauma. These include feeling overwhelmed, numb, constantly teary, not being able to sleep, constant questioning (what if I had done x, y or z, instead?) and replaying the event. They are not a sign of weakness and these usually fade within a week to a month.

What are the possible long-term complications?

One of the most common mental illnesses is a major depressive episode that can come on weeks, months or even years after the event. People who have had depression in the past or who have a family history are more vulnerable. PTSD can last for months or years, or even begin a long time after the event. PTSD will affect roughly 5 to 10 per cent of the population after a significant trauma such as the bushfires in Victoria.

What is the difference between grief and depression?

If a person has lost a partner or an immediate family member or an extremely close friend, grief can last for more than a year, so it can be hard to know if he/she is depressed. Generally people who are depressed, as opposed to going through the grieving process, have more of a preoccupation with thoughts of wanting to end their own lives and have little hope for the future or can't see any point of going on.

At what point should someone talk to a General Practitioner or mental health professional?

People should seek help if their emotional reactions are affecting their day-to-day functioning and if it's a more severe experience than one would reasonably expect, given the circumstances. It's vital that a person seeks help if he/she is having suicidal thoughts. Other signs to be aware of are panic attacks, irrational fear, increased heart rate, breathlessness, feeling shaky and dizziness.

beyondblue's disaster response

In 2009, *beyondblue* has been working closely with government and health service agencies to respond to the psychological impact of the devastating Victorian bushfires and widespread flooding in New South Wales and Queensland.

The response includes:

- A free information card *Emotional Responses Following a Natural Disaster*.
- Two comprehensive booklets (currently in development) designed to provide information and advice on emotional responses to trauma and loss following a natural disaster. One designed for adults and another for parents concerned about their children.
- *beyondblue* Information Stations are currently being set up in community service centres in bushfire and flood affected areas.
- Mental health training for community members in disaster-affected areas with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. The training will enable community members to recognise early warnings of mental health problems, available treatments, where to get help and how to start a conversation about mental health with a friend or colleague.

For more information visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call the *beyondblue* info line on 1300 22 4636 (local call cost from a landline).

Black Saturday: An army reservist's story

Bendigo Counsellor Dean Curtis is a Community Support Worker with the Central Victorian Division of General Practice who supports *beyondblue*'s work. Dean is also an army reservist. He was called in to Kinglake to assist police to search through the rubble after the January/February bushfires ripped through Victoria with the equivalent force of 1,500 atomic bombs, claiming the lives of 173 people and injuring 500 more.

As *beyondblue* continues to develop a long-term strategy to address the psychological impact of natural disasters such as the Black Saturday fires, Dean explains how those at the coalface were affected.

On Friday the 13th of February, Dean Curtis stood amid the unfathomable destruction of what was the picturesque town of Kinglake with a duty to return loved ones to their families. They worked tiring 12-hour shifts sifting through the tangled debris of what once were homes, catching sleep on patches of burnt out ground when they could.

It wasn't his first disaster scene. Twenty-five years ago, in the chaotic aftermath of the Ash Wednesday fires, Dean worked with the Salvation Army to provide essential food and water to victims at Cockatoo. But this time around, it was different.

"The level of destruction was much more widespread and more intense," he explains. "Tin rooves were melted on the ground ... the heat was obviously much more intense and the damage was greater and more widespread. More people died in the same square kilometre this time.

"Whilst it was worse (than Ash Wednesday), it was something I had seen and smelt before. I have had my time of tears more than once, as my wife will tell you. I think to a degree you block it out, but when it bubbles through, you have to let it."

But one thing struck him as similar: the inexplicable hit and miss nature of the destruction. Just like the 1983 disaster, the fire had completely consumed some properties, leaving nothing but a molten shell of rubble, while the neighbour's timber frame house stood gleaming without a lick of black soot.

Six days after the tragedy, the people of Kinglake were only just coming to terms with the magnitude of their losses.

"They were at the stage of coming to grips with reality, no longer in shock and denial but realising that 'this is happening, so what are we going to do?' There were perhaps only two reactions I saw, the stoic 'we'll get through this' and those who were still struggling through the horror of it all," he said.

While more and more stories emerged of heroism and tragedy, anguish and despair, so did those of generosity, resilience and community spirit. Importantly, compared to Ash Wednesday, Dean is convinced those affected have much better access to the emotional support they need.

"Given that this time around every victim has their own case-manager, I'm happy that every person affected by these fires is being taken care of. We didn't have that after Ash Wednesday; if that's the biggest lesson we've learnt, then that's a good thing."

First time dads

So you are about to become a father for the first time. While this can be one of the happiest times in your life, it can also be a very emotional and confusing experience. With the right advice and support you can make the most of this new change to your life and enjoy all that comes with it.

Having a baby will impact on your free time outside of work but should not 'wreck your social life' if you are organised and plan your time well.

Before you were both able to come and go pretty much as you pleased. Now you have to learn to negotiate breaks and check in with your partner. The baby's needs can be quite overwhelming early on, but it is important to remember that your needs and those of your partner are still important too. Talk to your partner about how you are feeling and don't forget to check in with how she's going too.

Becoming a father may raise all sorts of pressures about being a provider, protector, being an engaged dad and working hard at the same time — the balance can be difficult to find. Moreover, if you want to do things differently from the way you were fathered, you have to work it out for yourself from scratch. This can mean seeking out information or support, something that many men aren't used to doing.

Boxer Kostya Tsyu describes the births of his children as the happiest moments of his life, "When you're holding your baby for the first time and he's screaming for you, it's a feeling you cannot describe in words, it's unbelievably special."

Try not to feel that you're "on the outside"

At the start it may feel as though your partner has more of a role in caring for your new child, especially if she is breastfeeding. But being part of the new family unit is about teamwork. Your role looking after the house, fielding telephone calls when your partner is trying to get some sleep, or going to the shops for new nappies is just as important to the family unit as feeding the baby.

You may feel that you're more part of the family unit if you get involved from the very beginning. Some ways to do this could be:

- Attending classes together before the birth
- Being present at the birth
- Learning how to change a nappy
- Finding out what is needed to look after a baby
- Speaking to any other fathers that you know

As well as helping your partner, it will help you to feel part of the parenthood process.

Sex

Don't forget about your partner during this time. While sex may not be on the agenda straight away, don't forget to show your affection and love for your partner during this challenging time.

Sex might be the last thing on her mind in the early stages. However both of your sex drives will return to normal, you will just need to give it time. Her body has gone through some major changes, and it will need time to readjust. Her breasts will be full of milk for the baby, so finding positions that are comfortable for both of you may be a challenge.

Talking honestly with your partner about what you're comfortable with is by far the most important part.



“It used to be just me that I had to think about, now Evie (my daughter) is always at the front of my mind. I used to go surfing for a full day without thinking and now, after a couple of hours, I’m itching to get back and see what she’s up to.”

Joel Parkinson,
Professional Surfer.

Look after yourself

Believe it or not, dads are also liable to get a dose of the “baby blues”, despite not physically giving birth themselves. Studies have shown that male partners can experience significant hormonal changes and, coupled with the lack of sleep that comes with looking after a newborn, it is important to look after yourself well.

As well as being mindful of your diet and remaining active, responsibility of financially providing for a young family and assuming the role of ‘protector’ can be quite overwhelming. If you are finding these adjustments difficult, it is important to discuss this with your partner and other supports such as family, friends, counsellors or your GP.

Support networks

Don’t forget about your mates! Do any of your friends have children? They will be a great source of ideas and support through difficult times as they are likely to have experienced many of the same things. Learn from them about how you can do things with your partner and new child. You may find that you become closer to your own parents as you gain a better understanding of their perspective as parents.

If you feel down:

Make sure you eat regularly and think about good food choices

Regular exercise can help to get you out of the house and make you feel better

Mensline has trained counsellors available 24/7, to support you through this time — **1300 789 978**

Fast facts

- Foundation 49 is an initiative of Cabrini Health
- It aims to help all men over 20 years of age – of all cultures and socio-economic backgrounds
- Widespread screening and health promotion are key goals
- We believe supporting men to take control of their health is vital.

Men at work

Call us to find out about a straightforward and practical health assessment program catering for all men in the workplace. We provide individuals and employers with valuable feedback on health risks, recommendations on well-being initiatives and useful health information. Each participant receives an individual health report.

Foundation 49.
Promoting Health
Awareness in Men

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Five minutes with... Blair McDonough

TV presenter, actor and
runner up in Big Brother!



Blair McDonough is a presenter on Channel Nine's *Postcards* and an actor with *Sea Patrol*. He's been a familiar face on TV since 2001 when he was the first runner-up in *Big Brother Australia* and later as Stuart Parker on *Neighbours* (when he dated Delta Goodrem). In 2002, he was described as one of Australia's most beautiful people by *Who* magazine. So who's behind all the publicity hoo-ha?

Being on the road a lot for work must take its toll. How do you stay fit?

There always seems time to go for a run or a long walk before or after the day starts. So, keeping fit is relatively easy. Trying not to eat too much of the catering is always the challenge!

How do you stay in touch with family and friends – and is it important to you to be connected?

I've made one allowance that I won't budge on where ever I am in the world. The mobile phone is always on. 24/7. Communication with my family and girlfriend is my number one priority. If it costs then it costs.

Do you know if you have a family history of any illnesses?

My Grandpa survived two triple by-passes, but it seems at this stage that there's no specific illness that affects my whole family. Very, very lucky!

Ever had any serious health concerns? If not, what's the worst health issue you've ever had?

Playing a lot of football in my youth led to many bumps, strains and arthroscopies but I've been a fortunate one as I've never broken a bone and surgery has always been minimal. The scariest time would have been getting my wisdom teeth out, all four at once ... looking like a chipmunk gets you a lot of sympathy and I milked every last second!

Have you had any down times when you decided to change course? How do you deal with those "forks in the road" that tend to come along at different times in your life?

With the industry I'm in, those forks in the road come a long a little too often! I try and maintain an active mind and put my energy into furthering my scope of skills that can broaden my appeal in many types of industry. These days I'm a personal trainer, actively involved in boat building and I'm also renovating a house. All these skills keep me busy, time-flexible and moving forward. But, don't worry it took years of trial and error to find a way that was right for me to keep moving through the slow times. Perseverance and a lot of talking things through helped to achieve, and come to terms with what helps me keep motivated.

How do you relax?

I relax by doing something. Golf driving range, working on my boat, cleaning (can't believe I admitted that!). Anything that lets my over-active mind get totally absorbed into what I'm doing and stop me thinking about work..... then I love a good afternoon snooze!

Favourite holiday destination?

I know a little B&B in Victoria's Hall's Gap that I like to disappear to when it all gets too crazy.