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NEWSLETTER
MOVEMBER EDITION

WHY MODERN MEN MUST PRIORITISE THEIR MENTAL HEALTH



In today's high-performance world, men are expected to be everything to everyone – a provider, a protector, a partner, a parent, a professional. But beneath the surface of this polished exterior, many men are silently battling a mental health crisis that's rarely spoken about.



THE PRESSURE COOKER OF MODERN MASCULINITY

South African men are navigating increasingly complex ecosystems – juggling demanding careers, family responsibilities, financial pressures and societal expectations. In these environments, failure is feared, and vulnerability is often mistaken for weakness. The result? A culture of silence, where men suppress their emotions to maintain the illusion of control.

But the numbers tell a different story. According to recent data, nearly 80% of all suicides in South Africa are men. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among South African males aged 15 to 24* These aren't just statistics – they're sons, brothers, fathers, and friends. And they're not okay.

WHEN SUPPRESSION BECOMES A TIME BOMB

Unchecked stress, emotional suppression, and the fear of being seen as “less than” can lead to explosive outcomes. Poor communication, emotional withdrawal, substance abuse and in extreme cases, gender-based violence (GBV), are often rooted in unaddressed mental health struggles. When men don't feel safe to express themselves, the pressure builds and eventually, something gives.

REWRITING THE SCRIPT: SELF-REGULATION AND SUPPORT

The truth is you can only pour from a full cup. To be present, loving, and supportive in your home and community, as a partner, parent and friend, you need to first take care of yourself. Here's how:

- **Determine Your Mental Wellbeing:** A good starting point for Bankmed members is to conduct their online [mental wellbeing assessment](#). Based on your results you may be eligible to enroll on our [Mental Health Care Programme](#) and gain invaluable care and support.
- **Speak Up:** Stress and pressure are part of life but bottling them up isn't strength. Suppressed stress and emotion often lead to physical illness – migraines, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and eczema all tend to flare up under stressful circumstances. So, talk to someone – a friend, a therapist, a coach. Just speaking about the situation and sharing can lessen the sense of dread, overwhelm and worry.
- **Set Boundaries:** Work-life balance isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. Define clear lines between your professional and personal life to avoid burnout. That means logging off after hours and not feeling the need to respond to emails until the next morning. It means not taking your laptop on holiday and putting your phone down when you're engaging with family and friends.
- **Ask for Help Early:** Don't be a hero and wait until you're in crisis. Seeking support is a sign of wisdom, not weakness.
- **Challenge the Stigma:** Vulnerability is not a flaw. It's a form of courage. The more we normalise emotional expression, the safer it becomes for others to do the same. You might just be the reason that someone else speaks up and seeks help.

A HEALTHIER MASCULINITY

We need to redefine what it means to be a man. Strength isn't about “sucking it up” and soldiering on, it's about resilience, empathy, and self-awareness. By prioritising your mental and emotional wellbeing, you don't just improve your own life - you uplift your family, workplace, and community.

So, to every man reading this: your mental health matters. You are not alone. And it's okay to not be okay. Let's start talking.

* *The Mail & Guardian*



MANOPAUSE: THE MIDLIFE PLOT TWIST YOU DIDN'T SEE COMING

GENTLEMEN, LET'S TALK TESTOSTERONE

You've heard of menopause. But did you know men go through their own version of it? It's called **andropause**, or as some cheekily call it, "**manopause**." No, it doesn't involve hot flashes and mood swings over romcoms (well, not usually), but it does come with its own set of surprises.

WHAT IS ANDROPAUSE, ANYWAY?

Andropause refers to the gradual decline in testosterone levels that typically begins in men from their late 40s to early 50s. Unlike menopause, which can hit like a hormonal freight train, andropause is more of a slow burn. Testosterone levels drop about **one percent per year after age 30**, so by the time you're 50, your body might be wondering where all the mojo went.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THIS TIME?

Here's the plot twist: your body starts sending mixed signals. You might notice:

- **Fatigue** that no amount of coffee can fix
- **Low libido** or sexual performance issues
- **Mood swings** (yes, even you, tough guy)
- **Memory lapses** - like forgetting why you walked into the kitchen
- **Sleep disturbances** - difficulty falling asleep or waking up in the night and not being able to go to sleep again
- **Muscle loss** and **weight gain**, especially around the belly (hello, dad bod!)
- Even the dreaded "**man boobs**" might make an appearance.

WHAT TO EXPECT (WHEN YOU'RE NO LONGER EXPECTING TESTOSTERONE)

In South Africa, [studies like one conducted in Limpopo's Vhembe District](#) show that many men experience these symptoms but often chalk them up to stress or aging. The truth? It's hormonal, and it's normal.

But here's the kicker: many men suffer in silence. Whether it's pride, stigma, or just not knowing what's going on, andropause often flies under the radar.

TIPS & TREATMENTS TO TAME THE MANOPAUSE BEAST

Before you start Googling "testosterone injections near me," here are a few things to consider:

1. Get Tested

A simple blood test can check your testosterone levels. Don't guess, get the facts.



2. Exercise Regularly

Resistance training and cardio can help boost testosterone naturally. Plus, it keeps the belly at bay.

3. Eat Smart

Foods rich in zinc, vitamin D, and healthy fats (think eggs, nuts, and leafy greens) support hormone health.

4. Sleep Like a King

Quality sleep is crucial. Aim for seven to eight hours a night and ditch the late-night screen time.

5. Talk to Your Doc

If symptoms are affecting your quality of life, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) might be an option. But it's not for everyone, so chat with a Healthcare Professional.

6. Mind Your Mind

Mood changes and anxiety are real. Don't be afraid to seek support – whether it's a therapist, a support group, or just a good mate.

FINAL THOUGHTS: YOU'RE NOT BROKEN, YOU'RE EVOLVING

Manopause isn't the end, it's just a new chapter. Think of it as your body's way of saying, "Let's recalibrate." With the right mindset and a few lifestyle tweaks, you can navigate this phase with confidence, humour, and maybe even a six-pack (or at least a solid four-pack).

So, folks-next time you feel a little off, remember it might just be your hormones throwing a midlife party. And you're invited.



BMI: WHAT IS IT, WHY IT MATTERS, AND WHY IT'S NOT THE WHOLE STORY



Let's talk about BMI - that mysterious number your doctor mentions while you're still recovering from stepping on the scale. It stands for **Body Mass Index**, and while it's a useful tool, it's not the be-all and end-all of health.

WHAT IS BMI?

BMI is a simple calculation: your weight in kilograms divided by your height in meters squared. For example, someone who weighs 70 kg and is 1.75 meters tall would have a BMI of: $70 \div 1.75^2 = 22.86$

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the following BMI ranges:

BMI RANGE	CATEGORY
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.9	Normal (Healthy)
25.0 - 29.9	Overweight
30.0 and above	Obese

It's quick, easy, and widely used - but it's also a bit of a blunt instrument.

WHY BMI STILL MATTERS

Despite its limitations, BMI can still be a useful red flag. A high BMI – especially when it's due to excess fat rather than muscle – is linked to serious health risks:

- Heart disease and high blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Certain cancers
- Sleep apnea and breathing problems
- Joint issues like osteoarthritis
- Fatty liver disease

All these conditions impact your quality of life and if severe, can even result in death – a sobering thought considering they can be entirely avoided by maintaining a healthy weight. In South Africa, nearly **50% of adults are overweight or obese**, with poor nutrition and sedentary lifestyles playing a major role. That's a wake-up call, gents. Even modest weight loss – 5% to 10% of your body weight – can lead to significant health improvements.

BEYOND BMI: PERSONAL HEALTH CHECKS

So, what should you do? While BMI is a useful screening tool, it's not the whole story. Factors like waist circumference, diet quality, physical activity, muscle mass and overall metabolic health are just as important. For the most comprehensive health assessment you should conduct regular **Personal Health Assessments (PHA)** with your Healthcare Professional and gain professional advice on managing your weight.

Get the full picture with:

- **Body composition analysis** (to measure fat vs muscle)
- **Waist circumference** (a good indicator of visceral fat)
- **Blood pressure and cholesterol checks**
- **Blood sugar screenings**

These tests give a more accurate snapshot of your health.

FINAL THOUGHTS

BMI is like that mate who always speaks first - useful, but not always right. Use it as a starting point, not a verdict. Whether you're a weekend warrior, a desk jockey, or somewhere in between, regular health checks can help you stay on top of your game.

So go ahead, **book that screening**. Your future self will thank you.





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