



Mental Health and Mining

Facts about men, mining and mental health

- In the mining industry, men make up roughly 85% of the workforce.
- Everyone will at some stage be affected by mental health problems, whether it is directly or indirectly in a support role as a partner, parent, friend or work-mate.
- Problems such as depression, anxiety and substance use are serious but common conditions. One in 8 men will experience depression, 1 in 5 will experience anxiety and around 1 in 14 will have problems with substance use at some stage of their lives, with many others likely going undiagnosed.
- In most cases, treatment for mental health problems is effective. However, it is estimated that only around 35% of people who are struggling with their mental health seek professional help.
- Men are statistically less likely to seek help for mental health problems compared to women. This increases the risk of mental health problems going unrecognised and untreated.
- Left untreated, mental health problems such as depression can be a high risk factor for suicide. In Australia, there are approximately 2,200 suicides each year and 80% of suicides are by men.
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for men under the age of 44 in Australia, and the highest rates of suicide are among men of working age.

Risk factors for mental health problems in the mining industry

There are a number of factors associated with working in the mining industry that may contribute to mental health problems or make problems worse. These include:

- Repetitive and or dangerous tasks, physically demanding roles, physical health problems, including injury at work or chronic illness.
- Fatigue associated with long working hours, shift work, overtime or long commute times.
- Social isolation, particularly for those working in regional, rural or isolated settings away from extended family or social relationships. Fly-in-fly-out or drive-in-drive-out workers may have particular difficulty connecting with services.
- Industry downturn, which can affect people's sense of job security.

Early warning signs

There are a number of signs you can watch out for in yourself or your workmates that might suggest you/they are having problems. These include:

- Feeling moody, irritable, sad or worried.
- Shutting off or not wanting to see people.
- Loss of interest in usually enjoyable activities.
- Sleeping more or less.
- Eating more or less.
- Getting easily tired.
- Giving up on exercise.
- Feeling sick and run down.
- Trouble with concentrating or decision making.
- Putting off responsibilities.
- Not wanting to deal with day-to-day things (e.g. opening mail, paying bills, etc.)
- Relying on alcohol or drugs.

Taking action

Everyone experiences these symptoms from time to time. However, if several of these signs persist for more than a couple of weeks and interfere with your ability to manage life, it's best to go and see a doctor, or talk to someone you can trust like a friend or family member who can help you make an appointment.

It can be difficult to take the first step to get some support, but it is important to take action before mental health problems reach a crisis point.

There are a range of effective treatments, health professionals and services available (see Other Resources below). There are also many things that you can do to help yourself.

Looking after yourself

To maintain your own wellbeing and reduce stress, try adopting some of these practical tips:

- 🧠 Postpone major life changes - Making major changes in your life can be stressful at any time.
- 🧠 Resolve personal conflicts - Ongoing stress in personal relationships can contribute to anxiety.
- 🧠 Take part in enjoyable activities and learn to relax: Such as allocating time to do enjoyable activities such as exercising, meditating, reading, gardening or listening to music.
- 🧠 Maintain a healthy lifestyle: Eating healthily, exercising regularly and getting enough sleep.

Joining an information and support group such as **Partners in Mining** can help you to:

- Learn practical tips on how to support someone experiencing problems with their mental health.
- Find out where and how to access support services for the person you are supporting.
- Learn about ways to look after yourself too.

Find out more at: www.partnersindepression.com.au/mining

Other resources

beyondblue – The National Depression Initiative.
www.beyondblue.org.au

Family Drug Support - Assisting families to deal with alcohol and drug issues. www.fds.org.au

Man Therapy - Designed to get blokes to take practical action to take charge of depression and/or anxiety, and to combat suicidal thoughts.
www.mantherapy.org.au

Mind Health Connect - Trusted mental health and wellbeing information, online programs, helplines and news www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

Black Dog Institute - world leader in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mood disorders
www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

Conversations Matter – supporting community discussions about suicide
www.conversationsmatter.com.au

Everymind – reducing mental illness and suicide and improving wellbeing for all Australians.
www.everymind.org.au

Headspace (for people under 25) – National youth mental health foundation www.headspace.org.au

www.partnersindepression.com.au/mining