

# A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME

HEALTH ADVICE FOR  
AUSTRALIAN MEN  
ISSUE 14 // AUGUST 2010

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# QUESTIONS FOR THE QUACK

with Associate Professor Gary Richardson

We seem to be racing through 2010, with Fathers' Day just around the corner! If you are a dad, I hope you get to enjoy some time with your kids, and all of us guys should remember to catch up with our dad and say thanks! Cheers, Gary.

**Bill 53 asks:** *"Lately I'm finding myself getting easily frustrated with everyone around me and the only time I seem to relax is when I'm having a drink, or when I'm by myself. I don't know how to snap out of this. What should I do?"*

The first step is to find out what is worrying you. Make a list of all the things that are problems for you and the pressures you may be facing, and see if there is one particular thing contributing most to how you are feeling and acting.

If the feelings you have described are persistent over a number of weeks and are affecting your day-to-day-life, you may be experiencing depression. It's very important you talk to someone – either your partner, family member or your GP. Your GP can help explore different possibilities and assist in further diagnoses and treatment if you do have clinical depression.

Having a drink can be enjoyable, provided it's within healthy limits, but if you are drinking just to feel better then it is a big problem. Look carefully at why you are drinking and try to limit your alcohol intake. It is best to try and solve your problems with a clear head – without alcohol.

**If you are experiencing depression there are many treatments available and with the right treatment – most people recover. To find out about the symptoms of depression you can visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au). Or call the info line on 1300 22 3646.**

**Lou 47 asks:** *I know smoking is bad for me, so I have become a low-dose smoker. I only have one smoke in the evenings and two to three on Friday and Saturday nights when I socialise. I enjoy smoking but want to know if I am harming myself?*

In a word – yes! The more you smoke the greater your risk of many cancers including lung cancer, emphysema, heart attack, premature ageing and erectile dysfunction (impotence). People who smoke between one and four cigarettes a day are nearly three times more likely to die from heart disease than non-smokers. The only safe dose of smoking is zero, and the time to quit is now.

**For support and info on how to quit smoking call the QUIT line on 137 848, or go to [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au)**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
**GARY RICHARDSON**

CHAIRMAN, FOUNDATION 49



Foundation 49 is grateful for the support of *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* in publishing this magazine.

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Foundation 49 is funded through your donations and special events. For more information or to make a donation, please call (03) 9508 1567 or visit [www.49.com.au](http://www.49.com.au)

This magazine is generously supported by *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*. For more information call 1300 22 4636 or visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

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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# Q&A from the Boys' Night Out with Sheeds



We had a great night with Kevin Sheedy at Fed Square in Melbourne during International Men's Health Week. Kevin spoke, as did Assoc. Prof. Gary Richardson, and we had a panel of health experts there to answer questions from the audience. We also heard from our ambassador Craig Munns about his brush with death! The questions on the night were so good we thought we would share some of the answers with you!

## What is the trigger age to start having regular checks with the GP?

It is important to keep a close eye on your health no matter what your age, and all men should have a regular health check, but a number of health issues could become more significant after the age of about 40. Remember though, things in your 40's are occurring because of decisions in your 20's. Mental health issues are more common in younger men, and should be addressed so don't put it off – chat to your GP to know how to tackle this.

## How can we get more men's health nights in rural communities with under resourced GPs?

There are many things that can be done; you don't always need a GP to run these nights. There are great events organised

through community health services, with speakers and resources from various organisations. A simple way to engage men better is to talk to your GP about making the clinic more male friendly, such as sporting magazines in the waiting room and evening appointments for men. There is a lot of really good online health information you can access, and the Foundation 49 and PCFA Community Grants Program can fund these activities.

## I'm in my 70's and my GP has never suggested a regular health check. Shouldn't all GPs be recommending a regular health check?

Many GPs are really busy managing all the health problems that walk through the door. As well as GPs recommending annual health checks, we need to be educating men to request an annual health check as well. This is a great way for patients to educate GPs about what the community wants.

## Privacy and disclosure, particularly in relation to mental health issues can be difficult. How can men work with their GP to improve communication on sensitive issues?

Trust and privacy can happen in various locations. A good place to start is for men to help each other by asking if they are ok, and if they are not ok, encourage them to speak to their GP. This can help validate each man's concerns. Mensline offers a 24/7 phone counselling service where men can talk to someone about relationship problems or men's issues (1300 78 99 78), and *beyondblue* offer an info line where men can find out more about depression and anxiety, and where to get help and how to stay well (1300 22 46 36).

## Is high school a breeding ground for mental health issues?

For some people it can be a difficult time, but high school can be a breeding ground for positive mental health. It is important to look for ways to encourage your kids to have good positive relationships with their peers and with their family. It is also important for them to be involved in purposeful activities such as music, sport, drama etc.

## How do we encourage more men to have prostate cancer testing?

A prostate examination is actually a minor part of the examination. It is the conversation each man should have with his GP about prostate cancer testing that is most important. Prostate cancer testing will not be the best course of action for every man, and a conversation around this issue is very important.

## Things you should know

The average chocolate bar has eight insect legs in it.

The average human loses about 200 head hairs per day.

In a year, your heart can beat up to 40,000,000 times!

A sneeze travels out of your mouth at over 160 kilometres per hour!



# Energy drinks: friend or foe?

According to Food Standards Australia and New Zealand, energy drinks are non-alcoholic beverages characterised by the addition of 'energy enhancing' ingredients. These may include a number of water-soluble B vitamins, amino acids and caffeine.

The claims of energy drinks include: enhanced periods of wakefulness, an energy boost, extra stamina, a pick-me-up, a quick fix for the exhausted or sleepy.

The key stimulating ingredient is likely to be caffeine, added as pure caffeine or as guarana, a herbal caffeine source. Guarana is added either in combination with caffeine or on its own. It is made from the crushed seeds of a native Brazilian plant. This caffeine level in energy drinks is comparable to the caffeine level in a strong cup of coffee.

However, caffeine stimulates the central nervous system giving the body a 'sense of alertness'. Known caffeine side effects include heart palpitations, headaches, diarrhoea, dehydration, nervousness, anxiety and sleep disturbances. Current research from America suggests that energy drinks may also increase blood pressure.

In a recent article, Professor Lubman of The Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Centre suggested that there were a staggering amount of caffeine based energy drinks in Australia, despite many of these being banned in a number of European countries and that their use had increased greatly over the last 10 years.

Professor Lubman has also raised concerns for young people, given that the effect of these drinks on brain and body is largely unknown.

In addition to the caffeine content of energy drinks, many also have a staggering amount of added sugar making them a problem for those with diabetes as well as those trying to reach a healthy weight.

Of further concern is that many energy drinks are also often used as mixers with alcohol. Whereas energy drinks are stimulants, alcohol is a depressant. The mix can be particularly dangerous as energy drinks can mask the influence of alcohol and people who drink mixers are more likely to suffer alcohol-related injury. Both the caffeine in energy drinks and alcohol are also known to act as diuretics and hence could also lead to dehydration.

**If you have any existing medical problems or concerns, these are best raised with your doctor or dietitian first, before choosing to use energy drinks.**

**Article compiled by Cabrini Nutrition & Dietetics Department. Cabrini offers dietitian outpatients appointments; you can make an appointment by calling Cabrini Allied Health on 03 95081930**

## Caffeine – how much is too much?

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Less than 10 years of age – no caffeine

16 to 21 years of age – can try, no more than 2.5mg of caffeine per kilo per day, or, 125gm per day for a 50kg person, 175gm per day for a 70kg person

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Avoid caffeine in pregnancy

Your intake depends on your weight and tolerance

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Caffeine can cause dehydration with exercise

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If you already have health problems, check with your doctor before you consume energy drinks containing caffeine

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**Make sure you know the ingredients that are present in every bottle or can you consume**



## Common foods and drinks and their caffeine content:

Food	Caffeine content
Formulated caffeinated beverages or 'Energy' Drinks	80 mg – 160mg / 250mL can
Percolated coffee	60 – 120mg / 250mL cup
Instant coffee (1 teaspoon/cup)	60 – 80mg / 250mL cup
Tea	10 – 50mg / 250mL cup
Coca Cola	48.75mg / 375ml can (Caff Free 2 mg)
Milk Chocolate	20mg / 100g bar



# Men and Separation

Going through a separation or divorce can be one of the toughest experiences you will ever have. The range of emotions can be overwhelming and can lead to feelings of isolation and despair.



Clinical Adviser to *beyondblue*: the national depression initiative, Associate Professor Michael Baigent, wants all men to know that with the right support and advice, you can get through separation and divorce. The end of a relationship can be devastating for men and often separation comes as a shock and completely out of the blue. When men undergo a separation, they can experience a range of feelings similar to grief. The ongoing stress endured during this time can often lead to depression.

"Men going through a separation will often try and make themselves feel better by drinking too much or using drugs which, in the end, makes the situation much worse. They might also withdraw from their families and mates, work ridiculously long hours or seem angry all the time. Men's social networks often revolve around their marriage and if this breaks down, men can end up feeling isolated and alone," says Prof Baigent.

*beyondblue*, Relationships Australia (Victoria) and MensLine Australia, have joined forces to produce a free booklet to help men get through a relationship breakdown and beyond. It's called *Men and Separation: Navigating the future*.

The booklet is designed to provide straightforward advice and information for men of all ages to help them work through the problems and difficulties that arise following the breakdown of a relationship.

As well as providing helpline numbers and websites, the booklet includes advice for men on how to:

- look after themselves
- manage the impact of separation on their children
- relate to former partners
- navigate their way through the legal system.

Men can often feel angry and aggravated particularly when it comes to separations in which children are involved. If not assessed and dealt with, these angry reactions can be turned inwards and can lead to destructive behaviour in terms of alcohol abuse and violence.

"I'd be concerned about a bloke if he's gone through separation and he's full of rage and anger, particularly if he's drinking – that's a really dangerous combination. If it's a mate of yours, you might need to step in at this point and

get them talking about what's going on. There are lots of ways to get help and the good news is most people do get through separation and go on to lead a happy life.

"There is a wide range of behaviours and emotions that are often present in men going through a separation. Initially there's shock and denial, which includes thoughts such as 'We will get back together soon – it's only a temporary thing.' Following this is usually a period of frustration where a lot of anger is experienced. The next phase is usually a more depressive range of symptoms including self doubt and despair. There can be a point through this period where men are susceptible to depression," Prof Baigent says.

Typically, when men become depressed they start to withdraw – they become cranky and irritable, lose interest in things, lack concentration and stop going out with their mates. If you think you, or a mate of yours, may be depressed – whether it is related to separation or not – there is help available. Talking to someone is the first step and the best place to start is your GP. If you aren't comfortable talking to your GP, there are helpful information lines available, including:

**MensLine Australia**

1300 789 978

**Relationships Australia**

1300 364 277

**beyondblue**

1300 22 4636

**Lifeline**

13 11 14

Prof Baigent concludes: "Separation is a very difficult time for a bloke. The range of feelings and emotions experienced can be quite overwhelming – but there is help available. Men needn't be embarrassed about asking for help to adapt to the changes in their lives. If you're not coping, speak to your mates and see your GP. Depression is an illness but with the right treatment, most people recover."

**Men and Separation:**

**Navigating the future can be**

**ordered at [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)**

**or by calling the beyondblue info**

**line on 1300 22 4636**

**(local call cost from a landline).**

## Separation: the facts\*

- in the 2006 Census, 61 per cent of adults were in a relationship – in 1986 that figure was 65 per cent
- 566,000 Australian men are divorced and 225,000 are separated (2007)
- around 52,000 couples get divorced every year
- in 2007, 32 per cent of marriages ended in divorce - this is predicted to rise to 45 per cent over the next few decades
- about one in three (31 per cent) marriages ends in divorce
- people living alone and those who are separated, divorced or widowed are more likely to have a mental health problem
- approximately 400,000 Australian men do not live with their children
- 77 per cent of those children reside with their mother only
- one quarter of children from separated families see their father less than once a year.

*\*All information sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.*

*beyondblue: the national depression initiative* has produced a free, comprehensive booklet – *A Guide to What Works for Depression*. The user-friendly booklet rates treatments for depression with a 'thumbs up, thumbs down' scale. It covers medical, psychological, complementary and lifestyle options people may consider for the treatment of depression and features a tear-off bookmark summary of treatments that are proven to work. To order your free copy of the booklet visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) or call the info line on 1300 22 46 36



**beyondblue**  
the national depression initiative  
[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)



# My Health Tips from Elliot Goblet



Goblet covered in soap spuds

- 1** Just as occasionally rotating your tyres is good for your car, a little known fact is that rotating your kidneys is good for your body.... but don't take my word for it, try it!
- 2** Good sleep is very important and you will sleep best if you are both physically and mentally tired. I achieve this best by thinking about running a marathon just before bed time... sort of like jogging for the mind.
- 3** Laughter is like internal jogging and it's very healthy for you so make sure that you laugh every day... even if you have to fake it. Ideally you should plan to have a daily minimum of 12 belly laughs... or 15 belly laughs whichever is the greater.
- 4** Eat a big variety of foods but also take good vitamin supplements.  
  
I take vitamin A, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, executive B stress formula, Echinacea-C, vitamin D, calcium, bio magnesium, flaxseed oil, fish oil, zinc, bacopa/ginkgo complex, glucosamine, St John's wort and the kitchen sink... although the last one isn't strictly a vitamin.
- 5** Don't smoke. I was very proud of myself when I stopped smoking. After 3 puffs I gave up cold turkey. I'm now back to eating cold turkey but it's never smoked.
- 6** Cut back on foods with high caffeine. An interesting fact is that there's more caffeine in one bar of chocolate than there is in a hundred bars of soap. And you can quote me on that.
- 7** And lastly, look out for the new cure for baldness. Soon you will be able to have your eyes raised so that you won't have a receding hairline any longer!  
  
*(These "Tips" are not endorsed by Cabrini Health!)*





# Say “good night” to neck pain

As with so many things, when it comes to neck pain, an ounce of prevention may be worth a pound of cure. It's true that some causes of neck pain, such as age-related wear and tear, are not under your control. On the other hand, there are many things you can do to minimise your risk. One place to start is to look at how you sleep and what effect this may have on neck pain.

## Getting in the best position

Two sleeping positions are easiest on the neck: on your side or on your back. If you sleep on your back, choose a rounded pillow to support the natural curve of your neck, with a flatter pillow cushioning your head. This can be achieved by tucking a small neck roll into the pillowcase of a flatter, softer pillow, or by using a special pillow that has a built-in neck support with an indentation for the head to rest in. Here are some additional tips for side- and back-sleepers:

1. Try using a feather pillow, which easily conforms to the shape of the neck. Feather pillows will collapse over time, however, and should be replaced every year or so.
2. Another option is a traditionally shaped pillow with “memory foam” that conforms to the contour of your head and neck. Some cervical pillows are also made with memory foam. Manufacturers of memory-foam pillows claim they help foster proper spinal alignment.
3. Avoid using too high or stiff a pillow, which keeps the neck flexed overnight and can result in morning pain and stiffness.

4. If you sleep on your side, keep your spine straight by using a pillow that is higher under your neck than your head.
5. When you are riding in a plane, train, or car, or even just reclining to watch TV, a horseshoe-shaped pillow can support your neck and prevent your head from dropping to one side if you doze. If the pillow is too large behind the neck, however, it will force your head forward.

Sleeping on your stomach is tough on your spine, because the back is arched and your neck is turned to the side. Preferred sleeping positions are often set early in life and can be tough to change, not to mention that we don't often wake up in the same position in which we fell asleep. Still, it's worth trying to start the night sleeping on your back or side in a well-supported, healthy position.

## Beyond sleep position

Emerging research suggests that not just sleep position, but sleep itself can play a role in musculoskeletal pain, including neck and shoulder pain. In one 2008 study, researchers compared musculoskeletal pain in 4,140 healthy men and women with and without sleeping problems. Sleeping problems included difficulty falling asleep, trouble staying asleep, waking early in the mornings, and non-restorative sleep. They found that people who reported moderate to severe problems in at least three of these four categories were significantly more likely to develop chronic musculoskeletal pain after one year than those who reported little or no problem with sleep. One possible explanation is that sleep disturbances disrupt the muscle relaxation and healing that normally occur during sleep. Additionally, it is well established that pain can disrupt sleep, contributing to a vicious cycle of pain disrupting sleep, and sleep problems contributing to pain.

(Contributed by Harvard Medical School June 2010)

# Are you gambling with more than you bargained for?

Gambling is common in Australia with nearly 75 per cent of Australian adults gambling in any given year. However, around 300,000 Australian adults have a gambling problem that may affect part of their lives including their physical and emotional health, study, work or finances.

Problem gambling is thought of as a behaviour addiction and shares similar features with other addictions such as alcoholism and drug addiction. Reasons for developing a dependency on gambling differ but common factors include an addiction for the next win, a form of escapism or seeking an adrenalin rush.

For every person with a gambling problem, between five and 10 others (e.g. partners and children) also experience serious consequences, such as emotional distress, the breakdown of family relationships and financial difficulties.

## Gambling and depression

There is a strong link between problem gambling and mental health problems. Almost three out of four people with a gambling problem are at risk of developing depression. Gambling can also be a sign that a person already has a mental health problem and may need help.

Deputy CEO of *beyondblue* Dr Nicole Highet, says people who have a gambling problem often feel overwhelmed and unsure about how to deal with it, but it is possible to regain control and turn your life around. "Problem gambling may lead to the loss of relationships, home, health and career and can cause stress, anxiety and depression. If gambling is causing you concern, the chances are your mental health is being affected as a result," Dr Highet says.

## Looking for the signs

People with gambling problems have a preoccupation with gambling and may:

- Often ask to borrow money to gamble and cover their debts
- Have changes in their eating/sleeping patterns
- Start to miss work and other regular commitments
- Express suicidal thoughts
- Sometimes celebrate their 'good fortune' by gambling more

## Where to get help

Dr Highet says: "If you think you or a mate may have a gambling problem, it's important to seek help early. Problem gambling can quickly become a whirlwind, leading you to start feeling out of control. If you have a gambling problem, it's common to feel overwhelmed and you may find yourself in a situation you feel you can't get out of.

If gambling is causing you stress and concern, the chances are your mental health is being affected as a result. Talk to your GP about a treatment plan that can help you overcome both problems, and remember, the sooner you seek help, the sooner you can get your life back under control."

## Help is available.

**Gambling Help**  
1800 858 858 (national)

**Gambling Helpline – SA**  
1800 060 757

**G-line NSW**  
1800 633 635

**Lifeline Gambling and Financial Counselling – ACT**  
(02) 6247 0655

**Gambling Help Line – QLD**  
1800 222 050

**Salvo Care Line**  
1300 36 36 22 (national)

For online counselling, the following sites can be accessed from anywhere in Australia:

[www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au)  
[www.gamblinghangover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gamblinghangover.nsw.gov.au)  
[www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au](http://www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au)  
[www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au](http://www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au)



# F49 and PCFA Community Grants 2010

## Want to support F49?

Each hour, five men die from potentially preventable conditions. Foundation 49 is working to tackle this crisis.

Yes, I'd like to help Foundation 49 protect men from potentially preventable diseases.

Here is my gift of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Payment can be made by credit card or cheque made payable to: Cabrini Health / Foundation 49.

☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD  
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Expiry date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

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Surname  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Phone  
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Email  
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**Mail to:** Foundation 49, 183 Wattletree Rd, Malvern, Vic, 3144.

**Fax to:** (03) 9508 8549

**You can also donate by calling**  
**(03) 9508 1567.**

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.  
Your support is gratefully acknowledged.  
Foundation 49 is an initiative of Cabrini Health.



CABRINI HEALTH ABN 33 370 684 005.



It is exciting to see the Community Grants up and running again this year, and this is only possible through the generous support of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA). We have outlined the successful grants below, and hope they might inspire you to support whatever men's health activities are happening in your local area.

It is great to be able to fund applications from Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland. These activities will be taking place in and around September 2010.

### Community health nights x 7

- Prostate cancer education
- Skin cancer checks
- Diabetes education
- Health assessments
- Healthy meals
- Show bags
- Trivia competition
- Grand Final get-together

### Workplace health initiative

- Health checks
- Referrals to a GP
- Stretching and exercise program

### Housing and Support Services

- Health education
- QUIT smoking program
- Healthy lunch
- Remedial massage

### Men's Health Fair

- Prostate presentation
- Exercise class
- Entertainment

### Health awareness golf day

- Health education at each hole
- Exercise
- Social inclusion
- Health screening
- Health talk

### New dad's night

- Speakers
- Health information
- Healthy meal
- Interaction and support

### Prep dad's breaky, blokes and kid's brunch

- Healthy breakfast/brunch
- Dads and kids engagement
- Health talk and checks
- Health literature showbag

### Father's Day Family Fun Day

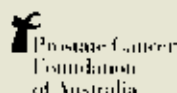
- Speakers
- Masterchef Marathon
- Diabetes testing
- Health trivia quiz
- Healthy BBQ

### TAFE safe behaviours brunch

- Healthy brunch
- Drug and alcohol education
- Arrive home safely talk
- Health resources

### Men's health workshops

- Health resources
- Healthy meal with a dietician
- Strength training session





## Men at work

Call Foundation 49 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.

The *beyondblue* National Workplace Program trains staff and managers to tackle common mental health problems at work. To find out more, call 03 9810 6100 or email [workplace@beyondblue.org.au](mailto:workplace@beyondblue.org.au)

Foundation 49.  
Promoting Health  
Awareness in Men

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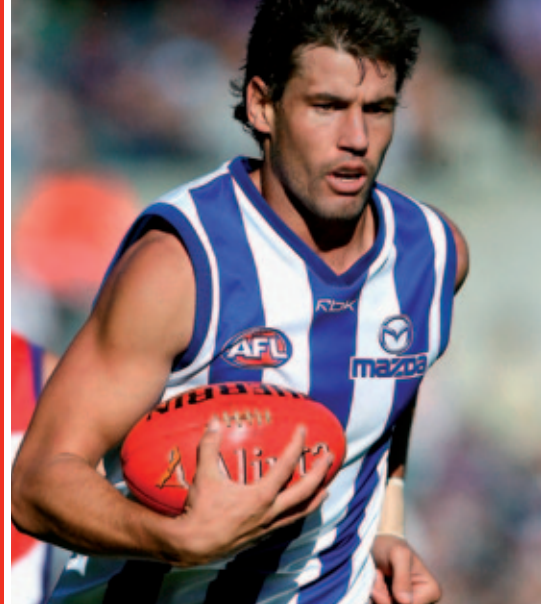


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*beyondblue: the national  
depression initiative* is proud  
to acknowledge the support  
of the Movember campaign  
in raising awareness of  
depression and anxiety in  
men across Australia.

## Five minutes with... Nathan Thompson



**Nathan Thompson –  
ex North Melbourne footballer  
now radio commentator.**

### How long did you play footy?

Most of my life. My father was an assistant at the local Vic Kick Club and I went down as a four year-old desperate to play football with my big brother. I played for 11 years with the AFL for Hawthorn and North Melbourne.

### You retired from the AFL in 2008 – what are you up to these days?

I am concentrating on becoming a radio commentator for the AFL. I'm working with Croc Media, SEN, and Channel Nine; it's a lot of fun! I'm an ambassador for *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, assisting with the development of depression and mental health programs for the sporting community. I'm also an ambassador for V/Line with the 'Life Training Program', which involves travelling around country Victoria presenting education and health forums to regional communities.

### What's the biggest health challenge you have faced?

Dealing with depression throughout my career and struggling to ask for assistance, or let my family and friends know. I spent a lot of nights very emotional and feeling alone with a lot of negative thoughts.

### What do you do to stay healthy?

I try my best to do physical activity three times a week. Usually a five kilometre jog with my German Shepherd. I love playing golf and keeping in touch with friends and family. Mentally, I try to stay positive

about what I'm trying to achieve. I also try to concentrate on the things I can control. When struggling mentally, I find a lot of my thoughts are based around feelings which are either untrue or out of my control.

### What has been your greatest sporting achievement?

I think my biggest sporting achievement was returning to football after dealing with depression throughout my career and playing another four years in the sport, with good results.

### Worst career moment?

Losing the preliminary final to Essendon in 2001.

### Best health tip you've been given?

Exercise regularly and don't overeat. Most of us eat out of habit when we really only need smaller portions. That, and play a team sport.

### What's a typical Sunday for you?

Awake at 6.30am for work at the Channel Nine Today Show and then prepare for the Sunday Football Show. Commentate the AFL or if possible spend the evening with my wife and kids.

### What is your favourite non- football thing to do?

Special dinners with my wife. Mini golf with my kids. Playing golf and having a couple of cold beers with my mates.