

HEALTH REPORT

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1800 675 229

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POLL SHOWS IGNORANCE OF STROKE PREVENTION

Many people do not understand that strokes, the third-leading cause of death in Australia¹, may be prevented. New research released today shows that almost half of Australians are unaware of this.

The research, published in the latest issue of the Pfizer Australia Health Report, was conducted for the National Stroke Foundation and research-based medicines company Pfizer Australia.

Although 68 percent of Australians polled said that someone close to them has had a stroke, only 55 percent of those surveyed believe strokes can be prevented.

Dr Erin Lalor, CEO of the National Stroke Foundation says that the finding from this new research is alarming and clearly demonstrates the need for further education.

"It is disturbing that so many people do not understand that many strokes can be prevented. There are a number of risk factors that can be controlled to reduce the chances of stroke," Dr Lalor said.

To help reduce the risk of stroke, the National Stroke Foundation recommends keeping blood pressure low, quitting smoking, eating a healthy diet and staying physically active.

The National Stroke Foundation estimates that 48,000 strokes occur throughout the nation each year, with half of all strokes suffered affecting people under the age of 75.

The research published in the latest Pfizer Health Report reveals that almost half of Australians surveyed said the figure of 48,000 strokes a year is more than they expected.

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"Many people do not understand the high incidence of stroke in Australia. The harsh reality is that one stroke occurs every 11 minutes in this country.

"Our message to Australians is that a stroke can occur at any age and the chances of one occurring can be minimised. This research further supports our current strokesafe™ program, developed to increase public awareness," said Dr Lalor.

The National Stroke Foundation's public health campaign, strokesafe™, aims to save 110,000 Australians from death and disability from stroke over the next decade.

Other findings:

- When asked about the risk factors of stroke, those who said they knew about stroke correctly identified the key risk factors as high blood pressure, family history of stroke, smoking and high cholesterol
- Prevalence of risk factors in those surveyed:
 - Just under one third have had high blood pressure
 - Just over one-in-five has had high cholesterol
 - Two-out-of-every-five have had at some stage in their lives been regular smokers
 - Irregular heartbeat has been experienced by one-in-every-ten
 - Six percent have diabetes
 - One-in-ten feel they have been excessive drinkers at some stage
 - Just over one quarter have a family history of stroke
- Most Australians polled associated a stroke with 'something happening in the brain', with 49 percent correctly understanding that a stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain is blocked

To assist with educating the public about stroke prevention, the National Stroke Foundation has partnered with Pfizer to produce this month's edition of the Pfizer Australia Health Report. Filled with useful information, free copies can be requested by phoning 1800 675 229 or by visiting www.healthreport.com.au where people can also sign-up for email alerts of future editions.

The findings on Australian attitudes and feelings towards strokes are based on responses from 1,469 people aged 18 and over. The research was conducted in July 2004 by independent consultants Stollznow Research.

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NB: INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERTS AND STROKE SURVIVORS ARE AVAILABLE IN EACH STATE.

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¹ According to the Australian Institute of Health Welfare