

HEALTH REPORT

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- EMBARGOED UNTIL 1AM MONDAY 27 JUNE 2005 -

RESEARCH SHOWS THERE'S MORE TO A SORE HEAD

New research announced today shows that over two thirds of Australians who suffer from severe headaches are not visiting their GP, and almost nine-in-10 are not seeing a specialist.

A staggering 84 percent of Australians report they have experienced a severe headache in the past 12 months, yet almost 40 percent of these people are not receiving any treatment.

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

Headache Australia, an initiative of the Brain Foundation, says that severe headaches can be a precursor to more serious health problems, such as stroke and neurological diseases.

"This is a cause for concern as headache is a complex condition," said Mr Gerald Edmunds, National Executive Director of Headache Australia.

Mr Edmunds says severe headaches are categorised as cluster, symptomatic, tension or migraine headaches.

"Severe headaches can be your body's way of letting you know that something is wrong. It is important for anyone who is frequently experiencing severe headaches to consult a doctor to rule out the possibility of conditions such as high blood pressure, stroke or brain tumours," he said.

The Pfizer Australia Health Report research found that around 70 percent of Australians have little knowledge of headache treatments.

"Headache management is a great challenge. You may need to try a number of treatment options before you discover what works best for you," Mr Edmunds said.

"While there is still no absolute cure, various treatments can provide a huge relief. Some medications are given once the headache has begun and others are taken daily to reduce the frequency of attacks."



The survey also found that severe headaches affect women more substantially than men. Of those who experience severe headaches, women make up 62 percent compared to only 37 percent of men.

When it comes to causes, personal and emotional issues are more likely to trigger severe headaches in women than men. Over half of women surveyed list personal issues as the cause. Emotional causes account for nearly 60 percent of severe headaches in women and only 39 percent in men.

According to Headache Australia, severe headaches affect a large percentage of the Australian workforce and cost dearly in absenteeism and lost productivity.

The research says nearly half of Australians believe people should not be expected to work when suffering from severe headaches.

This is especially the case for women, who are more likely to receive sympathy for severe headaches in the workplace. Sixty-three percent of women say they receive sympathetic treatment in the workplace, but this drops to 46 percent for men.

The survey also reveals there is a greater affect on work for those who experience migraines, with this group requiring almost three times more sick leave than the average of 0.88 days for all listed headache types.

"The World Health Organisation has classified severe headaches as a disability and called for a more serious approach to the condition. This has improved implications for the treatment of headache sufferers in the workplace," said Mr Edmunds

"In addition, effective treatment and good management of individuals with headaches will lead to greatly improved personal fulfillment and job satisfaction, as well as greater productivity for employers."

Key tips from Headache Australia in managing severe headaches are:

- o If you recognize the signals of an impending headache, stop what you are doing and relax your body.
- o Take your prescription medication or some over-the-counter medication.
- o Lying down in a dark and quiet room, placing a cold or warm cloth on the forehead, or taking a brisk walk in fresh air may help alleviate symptoms.
- o Don't be afraid to take time out from work and family to deal with headache. Remember, if you need help, just ask.

More information on headache management, see www.headacheaustralia.org.au. Headache Australia is exhibiting at the Pharmacy Guild Health and Beauty Expo at Darling Harbour from 17 - 19 June 2005.

To assist with educating the public about severe headaches, Headache Australia has collaborated with Pfizer Australia 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 perceptions of severe headaches are based on responses from 1245 Australians aged 18 years and over. The research was conducted in December 2004 by independent consultants Stollznow Research.

Pfizer Australia is the nation's leading research-based health care company, investing over \$A42m in local research and development annually. It discovers,

develops, manufactures and markets innovative medical treatments for both humans and animals. For more information, visit www.pfizer.com.au.

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NB: INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL SPOKESPEOPLE ARE ALSO AVAILABLE IN EACH STATE/TERRITORY.

For more information please contact Hausmann Communications:

Amy McIntosh on (02) 8353 5718 or 0404 489 917

Kylie Whetton on (02) 8353 5737 or 0413 061 122