

# HEALTH REPORT

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### NATIONAL STUDY SHOWS AUSTRALIANS IN DENIAL

A new study released today shows that most Australians are oblivious to the possibility of Parkinson's directly impacting on their lives, despite it being our second-most common degenerative neurological condition.

While as many as 100,000 Australians may be living with Parkinson's nation-wide, 85 percent of Australians polled for the Pfizer Australia Health Report think it's "unlikely" or "very unlikely" they will ever be affected.

A disturbing 61 percent admit they have little or no knowledge of the condition.

Parkinson's is a seemingly random disease as there is no known cause and no known cure. Symptoms include poor balance, trembles and shakes and muscle rigidity and stiffness. It can affect any age group but those aged over 50 are most at risk.

Despite this, a national study of over 1,200 people found that only five percent of those aged over 50 claimed to be highly knowledgeable about the disease.

According to Dr Peter Silburn, spokesperson for Parkinson's Australia, this is surprising because the same study also revealed that 37 percent of Australians overall know someone who suffers from Parkinson's.

In the over 50 age group, this rises to as high as 47 percent.

"This research has shown us that while a high proportion of people have exposure to people living with Parkinson's, many of us have limited knowledge of the condition," said Dr Silburn.

"This is of concern because if people with Parkinson's are to maintain their independence and quality of life as the disease progresses, it is vitally important that their supporters and wider network of family and friends are informed."

These results are contained within the second edition of the Pfizer Health Report, released today, in conjunction with peak independent body, Parkinson's Australia Inc.



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The good news is that there is a lot of empathy in the community for people with Parkinson's. No less than 94 percent of those surveyed believe the condition impacts the lives of sufferers either "a lot" or "greatly".

Dr Silburn said having an appreciation for the impact this cruel and debilitating condition has on those involved is a good first step.

"But what we now need to do is provide more education, especially when it comes to Parkinson's effects and treatment," he said.

To help achieve this, the Pfizer Australia Health Report also contains background information on Parkinson's disease, an overview of what it is, how it can be treated and where to go for support.

Copies can be requested free of charge by calling 1800 675 229. You can sign-up for regular email updates at [www.healthreport.com.au](http://www.healthreport.com.au) or can have the current edition sent electronically by sending an SMS, with the word PFIZER followed by your email address, to 0429 444 777.

Designed by Parkinson's Australia Inc, the study was a self-completion survey involving 1,264 people (living in 695 households) aged 18 years and over. It was conducted by independent consultants Stollznow Research. Participants were recruited by telephone and the surveys were completed in October and November 2003.

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