

HEALTH REPORT

www.healthreport.com.au

-EMBARGOED UNTIL 1AM WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE 2006 -

AUSTRALIAN SMOKERS OBLIVIOUS TO RISK OF OSTEOPOROSIS

National research figures released today reveal that a staggering amount of smokers appear to be oblivious to the fact that their habit can increase the risk of osteoporosis.

A key finding of this month's Pfizer Australia Health Report is that only one-in-three Australians identified smoking as a risk factor even though it is one of the most important lifestyle factors that can affect bone mass.

Alarmingly, this drops to one-in-five among smokers, showing there is little understanding of its associated risk in the group most likely to be affected.

The research was conducted by Osteoporosis Australia and research-based medicines company, Pfizer Australia.

The survey also reveals that smokers appear to have less understanding of other lifestyle factors that would help to prevent osteoporosis.

Only 29 percent of smokers (compared to 34 percent of all Australians) realise that Vitamin D intake is important for maintaining bone strength.

Additionally, 41 percent (compared to 55 percent of all Australians) do not recognise that not smoking would help to prevent the disease.

Professor Philip Sambrook from Osteoporosis Australia says that Australians need to be better educated on the condition so they can take preventative steps to lower the risk of development of osteoporosis.

"There are more than 2 million Australians who have osteoporosis and it will affect around one-in-two women and one-in-three men in their lifetime, so it is vital to be aware of ways to prevent its onset," said Prof Sambrook .

"While there appears to be some understanding of lifestyle factors that can lower the risk of development, it is a concern that Australians - and in particular smokers - don't recognise that smoking is a high risk factor."

Osteoporosis Australia says it is not all doom and gloom. The good news is that four-in-five Australians understand that having adequate calcium intake, regular exercise and a healthy diet can help prevent osteoporosis. And one in two consider having a family history and low oestrogen levels after menopause as risk factors.



While osteoporosis does affect more women than men, Prof Sambrook cautions that men need to remember they are not immune.

Worryingly, the research found that 69 percent of men showed little or no concern about developing osteoporosis themselves and had a much lower understanding than women of the lifestyle factors that can affect its development.

“With one-in-three men being affected by osteoporosis, the male population is still at risk and needs to understand the condition and take measures to prevent it”, said Prof Sambrook.

The research also hints that there may be a level of undiagnosed osteoporosis in the community.

Of those over 50 year olds who reported having suffered a bone fracture, only four-in-10 said they had been assessed for the condition of osteoporosis.

Interestingly, the survey also revealed that 48 percent of those polled were unaware that osteoporosis could be treated.

Osteoporosis Australia advises that all Australians can lower their chances of developing osteoporosis by looking after their bone health. Several factors contribute to healthy, strong bones including:

- Good nutrition (especially calcium and vitamin D)
- Healthy lifestyle (not smoking, low alcohol intake)
- Exercise (keeps bones and muscles strong)

To assist with educating the public about osteoporosis, Osteoporosis 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 level of awareness and understanding on osteoporosis are based on responses from 1,370 Australians aged 18 years and over. The research was conducted in 2005 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.

###

NB: INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE WITH PROFESSOR SAMBROOK.

**For more information please contact Hausmann Communications:
Laura Beament on (02) 8353 5719 or 0433 166 620
Alexis Bicknell on (02) 8353 5731 or 0400 161 598**