

# HEALTH REPORT

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-EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM THURSDAY 20 JULY 2006 -

## **CONFUSION REIGNS WHEN IT COMES TO IMPACT OF HORMONAL CHANGES ON WOMENS LIVES**

National figures released today reveal that the implications of hormonal changes in women including pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS), peri-menopause and menopause, are often not understood very well – by men *or* women.

Almost half of Australia's women find the subject difficult to talk about while more than a third of men confess they have no idea how these issues may impact.

More than 60 percent of men and women believe PMS causes stress on a relationship, with one-in-five women revealing that it is a repeated factor in relationship difficulties.

The research was conducted by the Jean Hailes Foundation for Women's Health and medicines company, Pfizer Australia, who surveyed almost 1400 women and men about perceptions of PMS, Peri-Menopause and Menopause.

### **Premenstrual syndrome**

A third of women said that PMS has a negative impact on their workplace performance.

Professor Helena Teede, Director of Research at Jean Hailes, says it is often not understood how much of an impact PMS can have on everyday life. But she calls on women to increase their knowledge and awareness of the impact of hormonal changes in their lives. Improved knowledge assists in allaying anxiety and is important in any approach to treatment.

"Women need to explore whether other causes for stress and anxiety are contributing to or exacerbating their symptoms and to discover individual ways to go easy on themselves each month when they suspect they may struggle to perform at top speed," Professor Teede commented.

"Of course PMS can have an effect on our wellbeing and so we need to be kind to ourselves. It really helps to understand the condition and to incorporate physical activities into your weekly routine.

"Women with PMS may need additional medical therapy once lifestyle and emotional wellbeing are addressed," Professor Teede added.

### **Menopause**

More than half of all Australians suspected menopause to be implicated in stress on relationships. When asked about other symptoms of menopause, two-in-five Australians expect a decreased libido or sexual interest, and just over 10 percent say it would decrease workplace performance.

"Menopause does not have to be the torrid time it is perceived to be! Recent Australian research shows that many women feel content with their lives, often freed of family responsibilities for the first time in many years." Prof Teede says.

"Those living with menopausal symptoms need to build a solid working relationship with their health professional and to go in search of reliable information so they can have a greater sense of control of the situation."

The findings reveal that there is little knowledge about the treatments that are available for menopause. Around 38 percent of Australians were unable to identify the benefits or side-effects associated with hormone replacement therapy and 82 percent said they did not know anything about herbal therapies.

So how can women help themselves?

- Seek reliable information to improve awareness of the impact of hormonal changes
- Eat a healthy diet
- Do some regular physical activity (preferably daily)
- Avoid smoking
- Look after your emotional health
- Maintain preventive practices and have regular Pap tests, breast checks, blood pressure, cholesterol and sugar tests
- Establish a good rapport with your medical practitioner and seek help if needed

And if treatment for hormonal conditions is required, there are several approaches available after consulting your doctor. For menopause these may include hormone replacement therapy and natural therapies.

The research was conducted to help the Jean Hailes Foundation for Women's Health (a not for profit womens health organisation with no financial interest in the survey) to understand the social implications and gaps in knowledge on female hormone changes on the lives of Australian men and women.

The Foundation is Australia's leading not-for-profit women's health organisation. It conducts research and a range of education services to improve the lives of Australia's five million women over 35 years of age.

The findings are based on responses from 1,245 Australians aged 18 years and over with a breakdown of 533 men and 710 women. The research was conducted by independent consultants Stollznow Research.

The Jean Hailes Foundation for Women's Health 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](http://www.healthreport.com.au) where people can also sign-up for email alerts of future editions.

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**NB: INTERVIEWS ARE AVAILABLE WITH ENDOCRINOLOGIST, PROFESSOR HELENA TEEDE, WHO IS DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AT JEAN HAILES FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH.**

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