

HEALTH REPORT

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- EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM MONDAY 28 AUGUST 2006 -

NEW NATIONAL FIGURES SHOW AUSTRALIANS ARE NOT GETTING ANYMORE ACTIVE

National research figures released today reveal adult Australians are not taking up the challenge to become more active. Now more than half are insufficiently active for health benefit, despite the millions being poured into educating the public on the importance of a healthy active lifestyle.

The findings, published by the Pfizer Australia Health Report in cooperation with Sports Medicine Australia (SMA), show that even more Australians than previously thought – up to 60 percent – are not doing enough activity for optimal health (thirty minutes of moderate intensity activity on at least 5 days per week).

Almost one in three of those surveyed said they were sitting most of the time in their job, indicating little opportunity for physical activity during working hours. And the picture outside working hours is not that brighter. Only one in 10 Australian adults say they play any organised sport and around three quarters of parents reveal that their family does not play sport or do any physical activity together.

Professor Wendy Brown from Sports Medicine Australia says these figures are very concerning.

"The growing obesity problem (around 60 per cent of Australians are now overweight or obese) is directly linked to an energy imbalance – energy going in via food is not being matched by energy going out via physical activity," Professor Brown said.

"Inactivity increases a person's susceptibility to a host of other serious medical problems, such as heart attack, stroke and diabetes. Increasing activity by even a small amount helps counteract such problems – even if you don't manage to lose weight.

"Because most jobs today involve little physical activity, it is particularly important that people who sit all day make time to exercise every day. The longer you sit at work, the more you should move when you are not at work," Professor Brown added.

Despite our international reputation of being a sports-loving nation, more than half the respondents to the survey said they believed that Australians were generally not very physically active, and this turns out to be true. Only 14 percent of Australians play sport for a club or team, with one-in-three Australians "not interested" and one-in-four not having "enough time".



Fear of injury is a key concern for one-in-three parents whose children play organised sport. One-in-ten has stopped a child from taking part in a particular sport at least once because of a fear of injury.

Around three-quarters of parents feel most worried about children being injured in contact sports like Rugby League, Rugby Union or Australian Rules.

Almost 90 percent of parents agree that it is important to wear a mouth guard in contact sport and 76 percent believe a soft padded helmet is also important.

In addition, 95 percent of Australians agree that it is important to warm up before exercise. Just over three-in-four agree that advice about injury prevention or treatment for sports injuries should come from a health professional with specialised training in sports medicine.

More than half of all Australians associate being physically active with a "no pain, no gain" attitude, which, according to Sports Medicine Australia President, Dr Bruce Mitchell, could indicate a reason why people are not exercising.

"Exercise should be fun and shouldn't be viewed a painful experience. Even just going for a brisk walk or playing ball with the kids in the park is all it takes to get active," he added.

To assist with educating the public about sport and exercise, Sports Medicine 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 sport and exercise are based on responses from 1,405 Australians aged 18 years and over. The research was conducted in 2006 by independent consultants Stollznow Research in consultation with Sports Medicine Australia.

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 or www.sma.org.au

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NB: INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE WITH SMA PUBLIC HEALTH SPOKESPERSON, PROFESSOR WENDY BROWN, SMA PRESIDENT, DR BRUCE MITCHELL, OR OTHER SMA EXPERT COMMENTATORS ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORTS INJURY.

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