

# HEALTH REPORT

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## MEDICATION COMPLIANCE - A NATIONAL HEALTH CONCERN

An alarming number of Australians stop taking their prescribed medicine before they are meant to, due to possible confusion about their action and a lack of ongoing symptoms.

These results are contained in this month's Pfizer Australia Health Report conducted in partnership with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. This report is due for release in line with Ask your Pharmacist Week.

The report shows that 41 percent of Australians have stopped taking prescribed medication before they were meant to on at least one occasion.

More than 50 percent of those who have previously stopped taking a prescribed medicine indicated it was because they were of the opinion that it was not needed anymore, while 42 percent stopped due to side effects they had been experiencing.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President Kos Sclavos believes this highlights a major health concern for all Australians, who despite taking the time to seek medical advice and fulfil a prescription, are not fully equipped with all the information required to understand the importance of continuing the use of their medicine.

"When you're taking a prescription and you may no longer have the dramatic symptoms that led you to seek medical advice or that your condition had no readable symptoms. It is easy to think that you're better," Kos Sclavos said.

"Unfortunately in some cases these are conditions that are chronic and ongoing, requiring medicines for the rest of your life.

Interestingly, the Pfizer Australia Health Report showed that men are more likely than women to stop taking a medication because they believe it is not needed any more (65 percent versus 45 percent), while women are more likely to stop because of side effects (56 percent versus 26 percent).

"The best way to manage an illness is to learn about it and how it affects you as an individual," Kos Sclavos said. "It is important to understand your medicines, how they work and what some of the side effects may be."



Pharmacies provide Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) that contains written information about prescription medicines, as well as important things to consider before, during and after taking a course.

According to Mr Sclavos, CMI helps members of the public to use medicines safely and effectively. They are an essential tool for those starting a new prescription, are unsure of dosages or want to know more about possible side effects.

CMI is also an important tool for you to engage in discussion with your doctor and pharmacist about your illness and the medicines used for it.

"If you are concerned about a medicine, talk to your pharmacist, who is a trained medical professional and a specialist in pharmacology," Kos Sclavos said. "Should you suffer any adverse effects, ensure you report them to your healthcare professional or pharmaceutical supplier."

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has collaborated with Pfizer Australia to assist with educating the public about the role of Pharmacy and 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.

Findings are based on responses from 1,458 Australian adults. The research was conducted in November 2006 by independent consultants Stollznow Research.

Pfizer Australia is the nation's leading research-based health care company, investing over \$A45m in local research and development annually. It develops, manufactures and markets innovative medical treatments for both humans and animals. For more information, visit [www.pfizeraustralia.com.au](http://www.pfizeraustralia.com.au) or [www.guild.org.au](http://www.guild.org.au)

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**NB: INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE WITH MR KOS SCLAVOS, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE PHARMACY GUILD OF AUSTRALIA**

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