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Young Aussie men take “she’ll be right” approach to bone health

More than a third of young Aussie men are taking a ‘she’ll be right’ approach to their bone health, convinced the disease is unusual in men, says Osteoporosis Australia CEO Gail Morgan.

A new survey from Osteoporosis Australia (OA) spoke to more than 1000 Australian men and found significant gaps in young men’s knowledge about their risk of getting the chronic bone disease.

“About 40% of the 18-24 year age group believe osteoporosis is rare in men or only occurs in women. As men age their understanding about the condition increases - 55-64 year olds (83%) are most aware of the risks. Significantly, more than a quarter of all men think it is unusual for men to have osteoporosis.

“The fact young men in particular know so little about the disease is concerning because it’s in their 20s and 30s that men need to build up their bone strength to see them protected into old age. Men can buff their bones by getting safe sun exposure, exercising and making sure calcium is part of their diet.

“We found that as men age their knowledge of osteoporosis and its potential impact on them also increases, but by then preventive efforts will have less effect.”

Ms Morgan says the survey raises some real concerns about general awareness, particularly as we approach World Osteoporosis Day (20 October), this year focussed on men and osteoporosis.

“Osteoporosis is a national health priority and we need to keep the focus on bone disease, which has a huge effect on communities. Brittle bones not only result in poor quality of life for those who break a bone, but have a significant financial impact on the health system – and will cost taxpayers up to \$33.6 billion within the next decade.”

The survey showed men across all age groups are confident osteoporosis would affect the other guy. About 60% of men did not believe they were at risk of the disease, 68% in the 18-24 year age group, but as high as 59% in the 65 plus group. In Australia 30% of men will suffer an osteoporotic break. Worldwide, one third of hip fractures occur in men and 37% of those die within 12 months of suffering a fracture.”

Former rugby international Pat McCabe knows firsthand the debilitating impact of breaking a bone. He joined OA at a Parliamentary breakfast this morning to launch the survey.

“Before being asked to be part of today I was aware of osteoporosis, but I thought it was something old women got. I had no idea it was something men needed to be aware of. The mortality statistics are very scary. I had never given it much thought before. A lot of young men spend their time worrying about building their muscles, they need to give a bit of thought to beefing up their bones.”

Still sporting a neck brace from his career ending injury Mr McCabe said ‘just about everything’ is harder with a broken bone.

“I can’t drive, I can’t exercise, I can’t do so many things that I would normally be doing.” He said.

World Osteoporosis Day: 20 October 2014

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Survey results: Osteoporosis Australia

Survey total: 1007 men aged 18 and over across Australia

Note: Darwin and NT data based on low survey numbers and may not be statistically significant

How common is osteoporosis or poor bone health in men?	Overall	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65+
Very rare	1.39%	3.45%	1.60%	2.09%	1.09%	0.65%	0.50%
Rare	24.93%	33.33%	33.51%	30.37%	23.37%	14.84%	17.33%
Quite common	62.07%	54.02%	56.38%	55.50%	64.13%	70.97%	68.32%
Very common	9.73%	5.75%	5.32%	10.47%	10.33%	12.26%	12.38%
Men don't get it	1.89%	3.45%	3.19%	1.57%	1.09%	1.29%	1.49%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Do you think you're at risk of getting osteoporosis?	Overall	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65+
Yes	41.31%	32.18%	38.30%	45.03%	39.13%	48.39%	41.09%
No	58.69%	67.82%	61.70%	54.97%	60.87%	51.61%	58.91%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

How common is osteoporosis or poor bone health in men?	Sydney %	NSW region %	Melbourne %	VIC region %	Brisbane %	QLD region %	Adelaide %	SA %
Very rare	1.38	0.00	2.09	1.45	2.08	4.17	0.00	0.00
Rare	28.57	28.45	25.13	17.39	22.92	26.39	19.05	33.33
Quite common	58.53	57.76	58.12	68.12	63.54	66.67	69.84	61.11
Very common	10.60	10.34	12.57	10.14	8.33	1.39	11.11	5.56
Men don't get it	0.92	3.45	2.09	2.90	3.13	1.39	0.00	0.00

