



## THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

### Minister for Ageing

#### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### OSTEOPOROSIS PREVENTION - A NEW PICTURE EMERGES

Half of women and a quarter of men over the age of 60 in Australia will suffer a bone fracture with most injuries occurring in the hip, spine or wrist, new research shows.

But, Australians can reduce the risk by having three servings of dairy to give them the recommended daily calcium intake of 1000 mg/day. (Lactose intolerant people can eat soy or tofu).

The Federal Minister for Ageing and Acting Minister for Health, Mrs Justine Elliot, today urged Australians to increase their calcium intake. "An extra glass of milk a day or an extra serve of cheese and a rigorous walk may just do the trick.

"To an older Australian, a hip injury can be devastating. On average a person will spend at least 11 days in hospital for treatment of a hip fracture. Many people cannot return to the life they had before a fracture," Mrs Elliot said.

The booklet, ***A Picture of Osteoporosis in Australia***, is expected to be launched today (August 4 at 10am at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Woolloongabba) by Mrs Elliot to coincide with Healthy Bones Week.

Osteoporosis – known as the "hidden disease", is a condition in which the bones become fragile and brittle, leading to a higher risk of fractures. It occurs when bones lose minerals, such as calcium, leading to a loss of bone mass or density. As a result, a minor bump or accident can cause serious fractures.

About 600,000 Australians have doctor-diagnosed osteoporosis, comprising three per cent of the population.

Mrs Elliot has ministerial responsibility for policies on injury/falls prevention, arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

"Osteoporosis is often seen as a silent disease as few Australians actually see or feel the signs until they suffer a break," Mrs Elliot said.

Healthy Bones Week (August 3-9) highlights the important role of calcium in developing and maintaining healthy bones.

***A Picture of Osteoporosis in Australia*** outlines the impact of osteoporosis on the community and the latest preventive techniques and management of the disease. It combines descriptive information with facts and figures, such as where do fractures occur as well as treatment.

There are three main ways to reduce osteoporosis. They are:

- Adequate calcium intake – calcium is essential for building and maintaining bone and combined with other minerals, it forms hard crystals to give bone its strength

- Adequate Vitamin D – exposure to sunlight; and
- Regular exercise.

For most Australians, dairy foods are the main source of calcium. Dairy foods are the most convenient way to obtain adequate calcium because milk, yoghurt and most cheeses are particularly high in calcium. Small amounts of calcium are found in nuts, breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables. Three servings of dairy products each day will generally provide you with the recommended daily calcium intake around 1000 mg/day.

#### **Calcium In-take**

**Children 5 to 9** years should aim for 2 to 3 serves of calcium-rich foods each day to reach a total intake of 800 -1000 mg/day.

**Children and adolescents aged 9 to 18** years should aim for at least 3 serves of calcium-rich foods a day to reach a total intake of 1000 - 1300mg/day.

**Adults up to the age of 51** years should aim to consume at least 2 serves of calcium-rich foods a day to reach a total intake of 1000 mg/day.

**Postmenopausal women** should aim for at least 3 serves of calcium-rich foods to reach a total daily intake of 1000 -1300 mg/day.

**For adults over 70** years, 1300 mg of calcium a day is recommended.

A National Health Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004-05) found about 600,000 Australians had doctor-diagnosed osteoporosis; of those, 85 per cent were women.

Unfortunately, many people do not realise they have lost bone strength until they suffer a fracture or injury. About 50 per cent of people with one fracture due to osteoporosis will have another.

The number of Australians at risk of developing osteoporosis and sustaining fractures could well rise with the population getting older. Australians have the world's second longest life expectancy after the Japanese.

But Australian women seem to be responding to the emergence of osteoporosis. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reported to the Population Health Congress in Brisbane in July that the incidence of minimal trauma hip fracture in Australia is declining, having fallen in females by 14.5 per cent, from 235 to 201 per 100,000 from 1998-99 to 2005-06.

Australians are achieving improvements in the diagnosis and management of osteoporosis. Changes in testing rebates, subsidised new medications such as bisphosphonates, and the rollout of public health campaigns and plans addressing osteoporosis and falls are all having positive results.

The booklet is the second in a series and was produced jointly by the AIHW's National Centre for Monitoring Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions and Osteoporosis Australia.

The booklet resulted from funding of \$2.5 million for the National Centre for Monitoring Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions at the AIHW to monitor, analyse and report on data relating to arthritis and osteoporosis.

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