



Consumer media release

osteoporosis australia

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## **Osteoporosis: never too early to beat, never too late to treat**

### ***World Osteoporosis Day – WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17***

**With more than 2.2 million Australians suffering from an osteoporosis related condition<sup>1</sup>, Australian Idol judge Mark Holden and former Olympian pole vaulter Tatiana Grigorieva are reminding Australians that it's never too early to beat and never too late to treat the crippling disease.**

Their sentiments will be echoed today with the launch of Osteoporosis Australia's 2007 White Paper, *The Burden of Brittle Bones: Epidemiology, Costs and Burden of Osteoporosis in Australia and Invest in your bones: know and reduce your osteoporosis risk factors*, to mark World Osteoporosis Day (WOD). The White Paper shows that despite the prevalence of the disease and the introduction of osteoporosis treatment guidelines within the past 12 months, more than 80 per cent of high-risk individuals remain uninvestigated and untreated.

Quirky Australian Idol judge, Mark Holden understands the frustration and pain of undetected osteoporosis. It was only after several episodes of broken bones that he was finally diagnosed with the disease.

"Initially I had so many tests to determine the cause of my brittle bones, but no-one could give me a reason and after further investigation it was eventually revealed that I had the bones of a 70 year old man.

"I was deeply depressed after being told that I had osteoporosis and questioned my quality of life until I realised that it's never too late to treat. I have taken medication, have a personal trainer and I eat well and walk a lot," said Mark.

Osteoporosis is on the rise in Australia, with a person admitted to hospital with an osteoporotic fracture every five to six minutes, up from every eight minutes in 2001.<sup>1</sup>

Experts suggest that around 3 million Australians will have an osteoporosis related condition by the year 2021 (1.65 million women and 0.51 million men).<sup>1</sup> The number of Australians sustaining hip fractures each year is estimated to increase by 15 per cent every five years until 2026 and the number sustaining vertebral, humeral and pelvic fractures is estimated to increase by 12 per cent every five years until 2036.<sup>1</sup>

OA ambassador, Tatiana Grigorieva knows the importance of identifying risks and maintaining a healthy lifestyle to prevent osteoporosis.

"Protecting myself against injury during my sporting career was vital. As a pole vaulter, I relied on my skill and the ever present safety mat. For people at risk of osteoporosis, the safety mat is all about identifying your risks and working to avoid them in order to cushion the fall.

"The key to preventing or decreasing the risk of osteoporosis is daily exercise, a healthy diet rich in calcium, and not smoking or drinking," Tatiana said.

Professor Peter Ebeling, Head of Departments of Medicine (RMH/WH) and Endocrinology, University of Melbourne at Western Health in Footscray, Melbourne said osteoporosis remains the greatest undetected and untreated National Health Priority Disease.

"There are about 262 osteoporosis related hospitalisations per day. So clearly we need more research into early identification, recognition, appropriate treatment and management by health professionals and the general community to prevent osteoporosis reaching epidemic proportions as our population continues to live well into their 80s and 90s.

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“This could include appointments of Fracture Co-ordinators in area health services for people sustaining a first fragility fracture, as well as Fracture Co-ordinators within the hospital system to identify and provide ongoing care for patients who may need anti-osteoporotic treatment,” said Professor Ebeling.

Osteoporosis also imposes a huge burden on the quality of life of Australians aged over 50 years with approximately 25 per cent of those sustaining a hip fracture dying within 12 months, 50 per cent requiring long-term help with routine activities and walking, and 25 per cent requiring full-time nursing home care.<sup>1</sup>

Osteoporosis Australia (OA) CEO, Ms Judy Stenmark said further development of education and healthy lifestyle strategies are needed to build skills and knowledge for people at risk of osteoporosis, to help them self manage osteoporosis, with the International Osteoporosis Foundation 2007 report, *Beat the Break* also prompting people to know and reduce their risk of developing osteoporosis.<sup>2</sup>

“There are ways of slowing or preventing osteoporosis, but the first step is for people to find out if they are at risk.

“It’s never too early to beat the break and the best way to do this is to know your risks. This includes knowing the difference between lifestyle or modifiable risk factors and genetic or fixed risk factors,” Ms Stenmark said.

Modifiable risk factors arise from unhealthy diet or lifestyle choices and include poor nutrition, low body mass index, alcohol consumption, smoking, insufficient exercise, frequent falls and low dietary calcium and vitamin D deficiency.<sup>2</sup>

Fixed risk factors are those that people cannot change, including age, family history of osteoporosis, presence of previous fractures and menopause.<sup>2</sup>

“While people cannot change their fixed risk factors they can reduce their modifiable risk factors through exercise, following a diet rich in calcium and adequate vitamin D (through limited sunlight exposure),” Ms Stenmark said.

Loss of bone occurs progressively over many years without the presence of symptoms and often a fracture is the first sign of osteoporosis. For this reason osteoporosis is often referred to as the “silent epidemic”.<sup>2</sup>

Current statistics indicate that one in two women and one in three Australian men over 60 years of age will suffer an osteoporotic fracture.<sup>3</sup>

The direct community cost burden of brittle bones in 2007 is over \$1.9 million dollars while indirect costs such as lost earnings and the necessity for volunteer carers and home modifications amount to several billion dollars annually. Osteoporosis falls within the category constituting the third largest component of health expenditure nationally.<sup>1</sup>

**For more information about osteoporosis, call 1800 242 141 or go to [www.osteoporosis.org.au](http://www.osteoporosis.org.au).**

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\* Online media kit available (WED, OCT 17 2007) @ [www.vivacommunications.com.au/risks](http://www.vivacommunications.com.au/risks)

\* Broadcast audio grabs available (WED, OCT 17 2007) @ [mediagame.com.au](http://mediagame.com.au) or [vivacommunications.com.au/risks](http://vivacommunications.com.au/risks)

**For more information or to organise an interview with Professor Peter Ebeling, Mark Holden, Tatiana Grigorieva or Judy Stenmark, please contact Kirsten Bruce or Ruby Archis from viva! communications on 02 9884 9011 or m. 0401 717 566 / 0413 834 906.**

### **References**

1. *The Burden of Brittle Bones: Epidemiology, Costs and Burden of Osteoporosis in Australia – September 2007.* Written on behalf of Osteoporosis Australia by The Department of Medicine, University of Melbourne, Western Hospital, Footscray, Victoria.
2. *Invest in your bones. Beat the Break. Know and Reduce your Osteoporosis Risk Factors– August 2007.* Written on behalf of the IOF Committee of Scientific Advisors by Professor Cyrus Cooper, FMedSci, Professor of Rheumatology and Director, MRC Epidemiology Resource Centre, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK.
3. *Calcium, Vitamin D and Osteoporosis – A Guide for GPs 2006.* Osteoporosis Australia (OA). Written by OA in partnership with the Australian and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society (ANZBMS). Publication funded by the Australian Government.