

# **Sporting champs calling for Aussies to 'man' up for strong bones**

## ***Launch of new resources for men to build bones on World Osteoporosis Day***

Today, Australian sporting heroes and medical experts will join forces to release new resources developed by Osteoporosis Australia to combat the rise of osteoporosis among Australian men.

Former World Ironman Champion, Guy Leech and Olympic marathon runner, Rob de Castella are challenging Aussie men to understand the importance of bone health by asking, "how strong are your bones?"

The *Men and Osteoporosis* consumer resource and GP guidelines, developed with support from the Federal Government, are designed to help men understand and prevent the disease.

According to Professor Peter Ebeling, Medical Director of Osteoporosis Australia, Melbourne, maintaining healthy bones should be a priority for all Australian men.

"One-in-three men over the age of 60 will sustain a fracture due to osteoporosis,<sup>1</sup> and yet this serious disease continues to be under recognised and under-diagnosed among Australian men.<sup>2</sup>

"While the chance of a man sustaining an osteoporotic fracture is greater than developing prostate cancer,<sup>3,1</sup> it is alarming that many men remain in the dark about their risk of developing osteoporosis," said Prof Ebeling.

"We are calling for all Australian men to strengthen their bones with regular exercise, calcium and vitamin D, and avoiding the harmful risk factors that can lead to fractures."

**The *Men and Osteoporosis* resource is the first of its kind to specifically highlight the importance of prevention, diagnosis and management of osteoporosis in Australian men. The resource identifies the following risk factors for developing the often debilitating disease:<sup>4</sup>**

- 1. Medical and family history**
  - a. Family history of osteoporosis and fractures**
  - b. Certain diseases and medications\***
  - c. Previous fracture from a minor bump or fall**
  - d. Low testosterone levels**
  - e. Being underweight**
  
- 2. Lifestyle factors**
  - a. Inactive lifestyle over many years**
  - b. Smoking**
  - c. Excessive alcohol intake**
  - d. Low calcium intake**
  - e. Vitamin D deficiency.**

Ironman Guy Leech is encouraging all men to improve their bone strength to lay the foundations for a healthier life to avoid the risk of fractures.

"Lots of Aussie blokes take pride in building strong muscles, but don't spare a thought for their bone strength.

"Men need calcium in their diet, resistance training with weights, and plenty of weight-bearing exercise like jogging, and court and field sports,"<sup>4</sup> said Leech.

Marathon runner Rob de Castella says that men need to be aware of the health risks they face with age, and should be proactive in fighting fractures.

“We all know that men tend to stick their heads in the sand when it comes to health, but men have no excuse for ignorance when it comes to beating brittle bones,” said de Castella.

“This new information from Osteoporosis Australia makes it easy for men to understand the importance of strong bones.”

**Osteoporosis is among the world’s leading causes of long-term pain and disability,<sup>5</sup> and evidence demonstrates that men have higher rates of disability and death than women, following a fracture.<sup>6</sup>**

According to Dr John Gullotta, GP and former NSW President of the Australian Medical Association, Sydney, reducing the burden of osteoporosis requires a greater focus on preventative measures.

“Preventing osteoporosis starts with kicking avoidable habits such as smoking and excessive drinking; and keeping tabs on medical risks such as low testosterone levels and any family history of osteoporosis.<sup>4</sup>

“I strongly urge all Australian men to ask to their GP about their bone health and pick up a copy of the *Men and Osteoporosis* consumer resource to start investing in their bones for the future,” Dr Gullotta said.

**The direct annual cost of osteoporosis in Australia comprises \$1.9 billion in surgery, hospital recovery, rehabilitation, additional therapy and home care.<sup>7</sup>**

Ms Naseema Sparks, CEO of Osteoporosis Australia, Sydney, says osteoporosis is commonly known as the ‘silent disease’ because it often remains undetected until a fracture occurs.<sup>6</sup>

“Today we are alerting men across Australia that they can be affected by osteoporosis, and need to consider their bone health,” Ms Sparks said.

“When armed with an improved understanding of risk factors for osteoporosis, Australian men can better prevent the disease and reduce the long-term consequences of brittle bones.”

The Federal Government has provided more than \$80,000 to Osteoporosis Australia for the development of the *Men and Osteoporosis* consumer and GP resources.

### **About men and osteoporosis**

More than half a million Australian men are living with osteoporosis<sup>5</sup> – 15 per cent of the adult male population.<sup>8</sup>

Men begin to lose bone mineral density at the age of 30<sup>4</sup> and have higher rates of disability and death following a hip fracture,<sup>6</sup> with a mortality rate of 37.5 per cent.<sup>9</sup>

### **About World Osteoporosis Day**

World Osteoporosis Day (October 20) is an international awareness raising day for osteoporosis patient societies around the world in partnership with the International Osteoporosis Foundation.

**The *Men and Osteoporosis* resources are available from Osteoporosis Australia (national office) and its state offices, by calling 1800 242 141 or visiting [www.osteoporosis.org.au](http://www.osteoporosis.org.au).**

*\*Rheumatoid arthritis, coeliac disease and corticosteroids (commonly used for asthma) may increase the risk of developing osteoporosis.*

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**To coordinate an interview with Prof Ebeling, Guy Leech, Rob de Castella, Dr Gullotta, or Ms Naseema Sparks, please contact Kirsten Bruce or Michaela Patton from VIVA! Communications on 02 9884 9011 or 0401 717 566 / 0423 877 748.**

**A full media kit and broadcast radio grabs will be available for download on Tuesday, OCT 20 from [www.vivacommunications.com.au/men](http://www.vivacommunications.com.au/men).**

### **References**

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9. Jiang HX, Majumdar SR, Dick DA et al Development and initial validation of a risk score for predicting in-hospital and 1-year mortality in patients with hip fractures. *J Bone Minor Res* 2006; 20: 494-500.