



MEDIA RELEASE

National Diabetes Week 2015 (12–18 July)

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 9.30 AM SUNDAY 12 JULY

3 out of 4 Australians underestimate the diabetes epidemic

New research* released by Diabetes Australia today shows that three out of four people substantially underestimate the prevalence of diabetes and over 60% of people don't link diabetes to its major complications including heart attacks, stroke, anxiety and depression.

"This study of over 1000 Australians** highlights most people still underestimate the vast number of people developing diabetes, and the serious health complications of diabetes if it's not diagnosed and managed," says Diabetes Australia CEO Greg Johnson. "People also tend to underestimate their personal risk. Two out of three people older than 55 years or younger than 24 years stated that they are not at risk."

Diabetes Australia's new awareness campaign '*280 a day*' focusses on the number of Australians who develop diabetes every day. The new TV ad shows images of 280 Australians and highlights the 24/7 nature of living with diabetes and its serious complications. "Everyone needs to know more about diabetes," says Mr Johnson. "Most Australians are at risk and 'you don't have to be old, you don't have to be overweight' to develop diabetes."

The findings of the survey show that almost two in three respondents correctly identified blindness (64%), kidney damage (64%) and amputation (62%) as possible complications of diabetes. Only 40% were able to identify heart disease and 34% identify stroke which are also major complications of diabetes. The fact that diabetes is associated with depression, anxiety and dementia was correctly identified by only a minority of respondents (36%, 25% and 7% respectively).

"This campaign is about all diabetes and is targeting the general public, not people who already have diabetes," says Mr Johnson. "All types of diabetes are serious and complex and can increase a person's risk of developing life-threatening complications, yet the general public do not see the whole picture."

"Diabetes can be a silent killer if not managed well," says Craig Bennett, CEO of Diabetes Victoria. "Many death certificates quote 'heart attack' or 'stroke', camouflaging the fact that diabetes is an underlying cause of death in many cases. There is a great need to share this fact with the general public and to raise awareness."

Diabetes is the fastest growing chronic disease in Australia. Around 1.7 million Australians have diabetes. This includes all types of diagnosed diabetes (1.2 million known and registered), as well as 'silent', undiagnosed type 2 diabetes (up to 500,000 estimated). More than 100,000 Australians have developed diabetes in the past year alone.

#280aday – What do you need to know?

www.diabetesaustralia.com.au

“There are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes,” Mr Bennett says. “Each type of diabetes has different underlying causes and may be managed with different strategies, but once you develop diabetes you will have to manage the condition every day for the rest of your life.”

For every person diagnosed with diabetes there is usually a family member or carer who also 'lives with diabetes' every day in a support role. Mr Bennett adds: “In our survey, almost 60 per cent of respondents indicated they have had personal experience with diabetes, either having the condition themselves (10%), or through having a friend or family member with the condition (49%). Despite this personal experience, these findings show a concerning lack of awareness.”

Diabetes Australia’s 280 a day awareness campaign is funded by a donation from the eftpos Giveback program. eftpos Managing Director Bruce Mansfield says: “We feel passionate about making Australians aware of the health ramifications faced by our society with the growing number of diabetes cases being diagnosed every day. Awareness is one of the keys to helping people manage the disease and enjoy better lives.” eftpos joined forces as a key charity partner with Diabetes Australia in January 2014.

Diabetes Australia is the national body for people affected by all types of diabetes and those at risk. Diabetes Australia is committed to reducing the impact of diabetes. We work in partnership with diabetes health professionals, researchers and the community to minimise the impact of diabetes.

**The new research published by Diabetes Australia was conducted by the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes, a collaboration between Diabetes Victoria and Deakin University.*

*** The sample of the online survey was 1011 adults (over 18 years) from all states and territories in Australia. 10% reported having diabetes and 49% reported having a family member or friend with diabetes.*

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