



## **Health Notes**

from the Lilydale Pharmacy

### **Men's Health**

Men might appear to be better off than women – and that may be so in the workforce, but certainly not when it comes to health. The average life expectancy for an Australian male is about 75 years, compared with 81 for Australian women. It is not only that men die earlier than women. Men also suffer more from conditions such as heart disease and colon cancer; and they are more likely to suffer accident-related injuries.

It seems there are a number of reasons why men's health is poorer than women's: men are more likely to smoke, be overweight, have high blood pressure and consume harmful quantities of alcohol.

Furthermore, men are less likely than women to consult their doctor on a regular basis. In the typical family unit, it is the wife and mother who is mostly concerned with healthcare, both for herself and her husband and children. From puberty, through their child-bearing years and onwards, women get into that good habit of regularly seeing their GP. It is only with great reluctance that most men would even consider consulting their doctor. By the time we get to our 40s and 50s our bodies may begin to show signs of wear and tear. Regular 'check-ups' and 'maintenance' procedures, which women are so used to having carried out, will be able to prevent serious illness or at least allow for early diagnosis and effective treatment. So it should be for men.

Even if no health problems are apparent, from the age of 50 onwards men should attend their GP for a check up at least every two years. If men have the occasion to visit a doctor, say for the treatment of an injury, or perhaps travel vaccinations, they should take the opportunity to have their blood pressure and blood sugar levels checked. Conditions such as hypertension and diabetes can occur with few symptoms and little or no warning.

There are, of course, some special health issues for men, such as prostate problems. The prostate gland is at the base of the bladder where it makes a fluid that lubricates sperm. The gland is about the size of a walnut and has a hole through the middle like a doughnut. The tube (known as the urethra) which empties urine from the bladder, passes through this hole. As men get older the prostate can become enlarged, pinching the urethra and upsetting normal urine flow – causing sometimes uncomfortable or embarrassing symptoms. There are several causes of enlarge prostate - some simple and some more serious – but nearly all can be treated effectively if diagnosed early.

At the pharmacy we have information and fact cards on most health issues. Some are; Bowel Cancer, Prostate problems, High Blood Pressure, Sleeping Problems, Heartburn and Indigestion and Gout. Each fact card offers information about signs and symptoms, self help procedures and when to seek further medical advice.