



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Health check-ups for all Australians needed

Want to make sure your new years resolution for a healthier lifestyle makes it out of the starting blocks and finishes the race this year? Starting out the new year with the best intentions to eat well, lose weight, exercise more and cut back on alcohol is the way many Australians begin each new year. How successful we are throughout the year is often a different picture. Talking with your GP about healthy lifestyles can help you transform those new years' resolutions into actions for the rest of the year.

The Lifescripts initiative assists GPs to give personalised advice in the form of a lifestyle prescription and provide support to patients on quitting smoking, eating healthier food, drinking alcohol safely, exercising more and achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

"ADGP supports general practice engaging in preventative health care. We know that a wellness oriented, primary health care system with general practice in a pivotal role can deliver better health outcomes for patients" said Ms Kate Carnell.

ADGP's federal budget submission for 2006-07 calls on the Australian Government to continue to support the Lifescripts initiative and to fund a new preventative health check Medicare item number for the general population. This will recognise the important role of primary health care in preventing ill health.

"Australia is facing an 'epidemic' of obesity" said Dr Jenny Thomson, ADGP Chair. "I call on the Government to support ADGP's budget submission and provide the pathway for general practice to provide comprehensive preventative health care for the Australian public. We need to be able to conduct a preventative health check for all Australian adults and treat obesity as a chronic disease under the Government's new Chronic Disease Management Medicare items."

Lifestyle behaviours are the largest group of preventable risk factors for death and disease in Australia. GPs provided education and counselling on weight and nutrition in 1.5 million more consultations over 2004-05 than in 1998 according to a report on General Practice Activity in Australia 2004-05 by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

"Engaging in healthier lifestyles will help to prevent or slow down the onset of chronic diseases, save in treatment costs for the health system over the long term and help people to live healthier, happier lives" said Ms Carnell, CEO of ADGP.

Of patients attending general practice consultations around half are overweight or obese, about 1 in 5 are smokers, two-thirds do less than recommended physical activity levels and one fifth drink alcohol at risky levels. Lifescripts provides a nationally consistent approach to promoting healthier lifestyles.

For more information please call Kate Carnell, ADGP CEO, on 0415 662 266.

WHAT IS ADGP?

- ADGP is the peak body representing 119 Divisions of General Practice and eight State-based organisations (SBOs) around Australia. The Divisions Network supports general practice and their practice teams and drives the implementation of innovative health strategies.
- ADGP, through the Divisions Network, works to integrate general practice with other sectors of the health system, both government and non-government, to deliver high quality care to the Australian community.
 - ADGP is committed to promoting the health of all Australians by supporting the role of Divisions in the nation's primary health care system.

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