

Media Release
9 November 2009

AUSTRALIANS PLAYING RUSSIAN ROULETTE WITH THEIR SEXUAL HEALTH

Risky sex is becoming commonplace in Australia, with new research finding over half of all sexually active adults have never had an STI check-up and 9 in 10 have had sex without a condom.

The research, commissioned by Marie Stopes International to launch Sexual Health Week (9-15 November), comes as Chlamydia notifications last year peaked at nearly 60,000 notifications nationally.

“Australians just don’t seem to be getting the message – regular STI check-ups and condom usage are the only way to safeguard your sexual health,” said Jill Michelson, National Clinical Adviser for Marie Stopes International.

Other key findings from the research include:

- 6 out of 10 sexually active adults have not had an STI check-up since they last had unprotected sex.
- Almost half (47.5%) of sexually active adults that have had unprotected sex and were not in a monogamous relationship when they last had unprotected sex were between the ages of 35 and 40.
- People aged between 18-24 (65%) and 35-40 (57%) were the age groups that most stated they have never had an STI check-up.
- Females are much more likely to have had an STI check up, with 51% saying they have. By comparison, only 36% of men answered “yes” to having had an STI check up.

“The majority of safe sex campaigns are targeted at youth these days, yet this research shows that 35-40 year olds are just as exposed to unsafe sex practices and more needs to be done to get the message to them to stop,” said Ms Michelson.

To spread the safe sex message, Marie Stopes International has developed and launched Australia's first ever national Sexual Health Week, being held from the 9 – 15 November and is supported by Family Planning Queensland and Sexual Health & Family Planning ACT, with the aim of educating and empowering women and men to take control of their sexual health.

“This Sexual Health Week, we’re calling on all Australians to do their bit for the country’s sexual health and have an STI check-up,” said Ms Michelson.

“STIs and unplanned pregnancy are key health issues that affect many Australians, and we’re hoping that with Sexual Health Week we can raise the bar when it comes to the level of sexual health knowledge out there, and at the same time decrease the statistics.”

More information on Sexual Health Week can be found at www.sexualhealthweek.com.au

Australians’ safe sex habits was commissioned by Marie Stopes International and conducted by Pureprofile in October 2009 on 1,002 sexually active males and females nationally aged 18-40.

About Marie Stopes International: Marie Stopes International is a not-for-profit sexual and reproductive healthcare provider, with centres in the ACT, VIC, NSW, QLD and WA. MSI offers a range of services, including abortion, vasectomy, sexually transmitted infection check-ups, contraception and community-based health promotion and education. The organisation is part of a global international partnership that delivers vital health services to over five million people in 42 countries worldwide. Surplus funds support Marie Stopes International Australia, our charity partner, which works to save lives and improve sexual and reproductive health in Indigenous Australia and throughout the Asia-Pacific region. For more information on the organisations, visit www.mariestopes.com.au and www.mariestopes.org.au

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SEXUAL HEALTH WEEK

9 – 15 November 2009

Sexual Health Week 2009 aims to educate and empower males and females to take control of their sexual health.

The goals of Sexual Health Week are to:

- Decrease the rates of sexually transmitted infections in Australia.
- Encourage regular sexual health check-ups.
- Remove the stigma surrounding sexually transmitted infections and sexual health.
- Promote awareness of the many contraceptive options available.
- Reinforce the importance of condom usage and practicing safe sex at all times.

Sexual Health Week is an initiative of Marie Stopes International and is supported by Family Planning Queensland and Sexual Health & Family Planning ACT.

More information on Sexual Health Week can be found at www.sexualhealthweek.com.au