

Summary of research findings: Lung health among Australians aged 35 years and older

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KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS¹

Australians suffering lung disease symptoms

- **One third (35%) of Australians aged ≥35 years have experienced at least one lung disease symptom in the last 12 months.**
 - Breathlessness when doing a simple task is the most common lung disease symptom experienced by Australians aged ≥35 years.
 - Australians aged 35–49 years are just as likely to experience common symptoms of lung disease as those aged ≥65 years.
 - Australians aged 35–49 years are more likely to have experienced a number of lung disease symptoms within the past 12 months compared with older Australians (aged compared with those aged ≥65 years) including:
 - chest tightness or wheezing
 - coughing up phlegm or blood
 - persistent cough
 - The most common symptom of lung disease experienced by Australian men aged ≥35 years is a persistent cough.
 - More Australian women (19%) aged ≥35 years experience breathlessness when doing simple tasks, compared with men (14%) in the same age group.

Australians at risk of lung disease

- **More than 7 million (63%) Australians aged ≥35 years are at risk of lung disease due to exposure to harmful fumes in their work place or a history of smoking.**
 - More than one in four (31%) Australians aged ≥35 years have worked in an environment for more than a year where they were exposed to dust, gas or fumes, placing them at high risk of developing lung disease.
 - More than half (51%) of Australians aged ≥35 years currently smoke or have smoked in the past.
 - More than half of Australian men (56%) aged ≥35 years are either current smokers or have a history of smoking, putting themselves at significant risk of developing a serious lung condition.

Diagnosis of lung disease symptoms

- **More than a third (36%) of Australians aged ≥35 years who have experienced one or more lung disease symptoms have never spoken to their doctor about their symptom/s.**
 - Less than half (43%) of Australians aged ≥35 years have had their lung health checked by their healthcare provider in the last 12 months.

- A third (34%) of Australians who have experienced a persistent cough in the last 12 months have ignored this symptom and have not had their lung health checked by their doctor.
- Only a third of Australians aged between 35-49 years have had their lung health checked by their doctor in the last 12 months compared with more than half (57%) of Australians aged ≥65 years.

Awareness of lung disease symptoms

- **While the majority of Australians can identify at least one symptom of lung disease, one in four Australians are unaware that chest tightness or wheezing is a symptom of lung disease.**
 - More than a quarter of Australians do not believe that frequent chest pains or infections are symptoms of lung disease.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY¹

This study was commissioned by The Australian Lung Foundation and conducted by Galaxy Research as part of a Telephone Omnibus on the weekend of 18-20 September 2009. The sample was 812 Australians aged ≥35 years, distributed throughout Australia as follows:

- 223 - NSW/ACT
- 227 - Victoria
- 154 - Queensland
- 101 - Western Australia
- 97 - South Australia

Following the completion of the survey the data was weighted by sex, age and area to reflect the latest ABS population estimates.

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN LUNG FOUNDATION

The Australian Lung Foundation (The Lung Foundation) is the premier organisation for lung health in Australia, providing medical and support group representation nationwide. The Lung Foundation was established in 1990 to reduce the significant and debilitating cost of lung disease and is the leading facilitator of research and professional development in lung disease. The Lung Foundation offers LungNet – a national network of patient support groups for people with COPD and other lung conditions. Patients are supported with information via www.lungfoundation.com.au a quarterly health education newsletter, telephone information and toll free support hotline (1800 654 301).

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Reference

1. Galaxy Research, Telephone Omnibus, Lung Health, 18-20 September 2009.