

Media release

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Make a Splash and get fit at your own pace

Arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions such as osteoarthritis are painful conditions that can cause reduced quality of life at work and at home.

Healthy eating and regular exercise, especially walking, helps to prevent chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and musculoskeletal conditions such as arthritis and osteoarthritis. Exercising in warm water is a great way to keep active and healthy. It's suitable for people of all ages and fitness levels, and can help take pressure off sore joints and muscles.

To promote messages around healthy lifestyles including healthy eating and regular physical activity, the State Government's Department of Health has provided funding to Arthritis Victoria to establish links with the Heidelberg West Neighbourhood Renewal Project. Together they have set up a **Make a Splash** warm water exercise class at Banyule City Council's Olympic Leisure Centre, for people living in the West Heidelberg area.

The weekly class has already proved very popular with local residents and new participants are always welcome.

Zanne Kawalsky, a health educator at Arthritis Victoria, explains how **Make a Splash** works.

"Each Wednesday at 12.00 noon, the group meets up to discuss healthy eating and physical activity, and for a fun and gentle water exercise workout. The 45-minute class is suitable for beginners of all ages and fitness levels. The class is led by trained Arthritis Victoria volunteers.

"It doesn't matter what shape you're in because we'll help you exercise at your own pace," says Zanne. "**Make a Splash** is the ideal way to start becoming more active and improve your health – and you'll meet your neighbours at the same time. Anyone living in the Heidelberg West area is welcome."

When?	Every Wednesday at 12 noon. The class runs for 45 minutes.
Where?	Olympic Leisure Centre 15 Alamein Road Heidelberg West
How much?	\$2.00 per class
What to wear?	Wear bathers or other suitable clothing such as shorts and a t-shirt.
Find out more	Zanne Kawalsky, Arthritis Victoria – phone 8531 8047, email zanne@arthritistic.org.au

Ends/...

Media contact

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Notes to editor

The Health Burden

- Estimates from the 2006 *Population Health Survey* suggest that 1 in 5 (20.0 per cent) Victorian adults aged 18 years or over had been diagnosed with arthritis, and 4.4 per cent had been diagnosed with osteoporosis¹.
- Overall, arthritis was more prevalent among women, with 19.9% of women estimated to have some form of arthritis in 2007 compared to 17.1% of men.
- 62 per cent or 2.4 million of those with arthritis are in the working age population (15-64).
- Obesity is an important risk factor for osteoarthritis; obese people are around 2.4 times as likely to have osteoarthritis as people of normal weight, while overweight people are 35% more likely to have osteoarthritis.

Improving the health of all Victorians

The Victorian Government is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all Victorians. Investing in approaches that promote, support and enable active living can provide an opportunity to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals while strengthening and supporting families and the community.

There are a number of ways of reducing the risk of the onset of arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions:

- avoiding joint injury
- avoiding vitamin D deficiency
- adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours:
 - healthy weight - obesity is a risk factor for all chronic disease
 - healthy eating – a balanced diet rich in vitamin D and calcium
 - regular physical activity
 - avoiding tobacco use
 - avoiding high risk alcohol use and
 - falls and falls injuries prevention strategies.
- Regular, moderate exercise aids in the prevention of musculoskeletal conditions and offers a number of benefits to people with arthritis and osteoporosis. For those with the condition, exercise reduces joint pain and stiffness, builds strong muscle around the joints, and increases flexibility and endurance.
- Weight-bearing exercise assists in the maintenance of bone mass. Therefore, regular exercise such as walking, jogging, playing tennis or aerobic classes is recommended to help in the prevention of osteoporosis.

Arthritis Victoria

- Arthritis Victoria, www.arthritisvic.org.au, is the leading Victorian organization supporting people with arthritis, osteoporosis and other musculoskeletal conditions. The aim is to improve quality of life, prevent disability, promote self-management and positive health and fitness, increase independence and support the efforts of carers.
- For information on arthritis, osteoporosis and other musculoskeletal conditions, call the Arthritis Victoria **Telephone Information Service**, 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Phone **03 8531 8000** or **1800 011 041** (toll free for country callers).

Neighbourhood Renewal

- Neighbourhood Renewal is a long-term commitment by the Victorian State Government. It aims to narrow the gap between disadvantaged communities and the rest of the State. Neighbourhood Renewal brings together the resources and ideas of residents, governments, businesses and community groups. The initiative has six key objectives, which are:

¹ Victorian Population Health Survey 2006, Department of Human Services, Victoria, 2006.

- increased pride and participation
- improved employment, learning and local economic activity
- enhanced housing and environment
- reduced crime and greater safety
- better health and wellbeing
- increased access to services and improved government responsiveness.