What do women want to know?

Women’s health information needs in Australia survey 2015

Key findings

The women’s health information needs in Australia survey:
• investigated gaps in women’s health information and service needs
• explored women’s experiences with maintaining their health and preventing illness and disease

The survey provides insights that will influence health service provision and benefit the health of all women in Australia.

What women worry most about

- Healthy living including weight management, physical activity, ageing, fatigue and diet
- Cancer, in particular breast, skin and ovarian cancer
- Mental and emotional health including depression, anxiety, memory, dementia and stress
- Cardiovascular health including heart health, high blood pressure, stroke and cholesterol
- Sexual health, especially painful sex
Key findings

Knowledge gaps

- Women indicated they know a lot about healthy living, periods, contraception, sexual health, depression and anxiety.

- Women indicated they know little about recognising symptoms of heart attack or heart disease and that having information on managing blood pressure and cholesterol is important to them. Recognising the symptoms of heart attack for women is vital as women are less likely than men to seek help when they are having a heart attack and health professionals don’t always treat women immediately for heart attack when they present.

- Women and health professionals would like women to know more about the safety and effectiveness of natural therapies. Given large numbers of women use natural therapies this is an area which requires communication of evidence-based information and is an area of need that can significantly impact on women’s health.

- Domestic violence has received a lot of attention recently from the media, law enforcement and multiple levels of government. The focus is welcome, however, our survey is telling us that both women and health professionals still want and need more information on domestic violence prevention and where to go for support.

68% of Australian women know little (or nothing) about recognising the symptoms of heart disease.
Finding information

• Women easily find health information on the Internet and social media but they don’t necessarily trust these sources, which comes as a very positive finding. ‘Dr Google’ is now a well used term and while many laugh about the term, the impact of misinformation about health on the Web can have serious and deleterious effects. The survey suggests that the sources women are more likely to trust are independent health organisations such as Jean Hailes, health professionals, government Websites and health information pamphlets.

• Health professionals use the Internet and health information pamphlets to access health information for their patients and clients but are not as likely to use government websites.

Who do women trust for their health information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Information Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent health organisations</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health professionals</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health information pamphlets</td>
<td>77%</td>
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</tbody>
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Access to services

• Women would like more women’s health clinics and more doctors trained in women’s health, but not necessarily more female doctors.

• Health professionals think women would benefit from increased access to healthcare in rural and remote areas, increased health promotion, education and preventative measures and increased mental health support.
Barriers to healthy living

Lack of time and lack of motivation are the most common barriers cited by women and health professionals to women being their healthiest. However, while women list lack of money as the next barrier, health professionals have a slightly different view. They think women are ‘unsure’ about what they need to do to be at their healthiest. This could mean two things: 1) That women receive a lot of information about healthy living but this doesn’t necessarily help them know what to actually do and doesn’t convert into practise or 2) That women don’t receive enough information about living a healthy life and are still unsure what to do to be the healthiest they could be.

For access to the full Women’s health information needs in Australia survey 2015 report go to: jeanhailes.org.au

About the survey
Jean Hailes for Women’s Health conducted the survey with a sample of 2798 women and 527 health professionals across Australia. The survey was designed to explore current women’s health knowledge, worries and concerns about health, unmet health needs and barriers to healthy behaviours across Australia.

About Jean Hailes for Women’s Health
Founded in 1992, Jean Hailes for Women’s Health reflects the enduring legacy that Dr Jean Hailes made to women’s health. Today, Jean Hailes is Australia’s leading and most trusted women’s health organisation combining clinical care, evidence-based research and practical education for women and health professionals. It aims to translate the latest scientific and medical evidence in order to inspire positive change in women by improving their physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

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