

<http://www.psa.org.au/selfcare>

### ***Flower power to combat cancer***

We can say goodbye to the blues of winter a few days early this year by embracing the springtime yellow of the daffodil on Friday August 26.

Daffodil Day was originally created by the Canadian Cancer Society in the early 1980s. Now, claiming international significance, Daffodil Day is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Australia and has become the largest national fund-raising event of its kind.

Daffodil Day also serves to highlight prevention and treatment strategies in regard to Australia's number one killer – cancer. Each year in Australia, more than 100,000 new cases of cancer are diagnosed (this is in addition to so-called non-melanoma skin cancer which accounts for about 440,000 extra cases) and more than 40,000 people will die from the disease. Every year the number of cancer cases continues to grow; by the age of 85, one in every two Australians will be directly affected by cancer.

The good news is that while cancer is on the increase, death rates are actually falling. More than half of all cancers can be successfully treated. Not surprisingly, early diagnosis and treatment is critical. (Check out the Cancer Council Australia website for a list of early warning signs)

Excluding non-melanoma skin cancers, the most common cancers in Australia are prostate (actually the most common), colorectal (bowel), breast, melanoma and lung cancer.

Improved treatments for cancer have meant greatly improved health outcomes; but the greatest benefits will undoubtedly come from the introduction of more effective prevention strategies.

According to Cancer Council Australia, each year in Australia, more than 6000 deaths from cancer can be attributed to three major risk factors: inadequate intake of fruit and vegetables, inadequate physical activity and overweight and obesity.

Australian obesity levels tripled between 1985 and 1995. Just over 15 years later, the situation is worse with obesity among children now a major concern. This places thousands of even young Australians at risk of a number of cancers as well as other diseases such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

The importance of cancer prevention by behaviour and lifestyle change is reinforced by research published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* which shows that once cancer is diagnosed, modification of diet or the use of dietary supplements (such as vitamins or antioxidants) do not seem to alter the course of the disease.

Of course, tobacco is also a major cause of preventable disease. Unless current smokers quit, current death rates will continue.

Australia has been a world leader in tobacco control but still thousands of people are dying prematurely as a result of active and passive smoking. Tobacco is the only consumer product which, when used as directed, kills half of its consumers

So, a few simple lifestyle changes can make a huge difference to your health long term. For some helpful hints on how to quit smoking for good, ask for the *Staying a Non-Smoker* fact card from one of the 1500 Self Care Pharmacies around Australia – pharmacies providing the Pharmaceutical Society's Self Care health information. You can call 1 300 369 772 for the nearest location or log onto the website [www.psa.org.au](http://www.psa.org.au) and click on Self Care Pharmacy Finder. *Fat and Cholesterol*, *Fibre and Bowel Health*, *Prostate Problems* and *Sense in the Sun* are some other titles in the series that can help you stay healthy longer.

Of course you can also help the community as a whole in the fight against cancer by purchasing a daffodil or two of the more than two million for sale on Friday 26.

And no excuses if you're allergic to flowers. There'll be plenty of other yellow merchandise for sale: brooches, pins, pens, key rings, footballs and the ever-popular super hero Dougal Bear – all to assist the work of the Cancer Council.