

MEDIA RELEASE

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OLDER AUSTRALIANS UNDER PRESSURE FROM CHRONIC WOUND CARE COSTS

Pensioners could be facing a financial crisis as they spend almost 20 per cent or \$4,000 of their income each year on treating chronic wounds, the nation's peak body on chronic wounds has warned.

Wounds Australia has revealed the shocking figure during *Wound Awareness Week 2020*, saying urgent action must be taken to address this hidden health crisis.

Analysis by Wounds Australia shows 420,000 Australians suffer from chronic wounds each year, costing the nation's health and aged care budgets over \$3 billion. Average out of pocket treatment costs for individuals are around \$340 a month.

With over 65-year-olds being the most likely to suffer from a chronic wound, pensioners and superannuants are struggling to balance their budgets.

Wounds Australia says immediate relief could be provided if governments took action to improve the current policies and programs used to manage and treat wounds.

"With seniors usually relying on a fixed income, the financial obstacles presented by out of pocket costs means thousands of Australians are suffering needlessly," Wounds Australia CEO Blake Wilson said.

"Wounds Australia wants to partner with governments to help them to deliver our shared goals of better health and wellbeing for Australians."

A chronic wound is any wound that has not progressed through normal healing stages. They can last months or years, leading to odour, pain, disfigurement, and social stigma. Pain can prevent people from working, studying, or enjoying activities others take for granted.

However, proper care from a wound care specialist in the early stages can significantly reduce physical, emotional, and psychological suffering.

If you or a family member is over 65, you should be aware of risk factors and seek the advice of healthcare specialists, especially if there are further complications such as:

- Diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and renal disease
- Poor mobility
- Obesity

Advice, help, and treatment is available from a range of qualified professionals. Early intervention is far more likely to reduce the time and costs spent on healing a chronic wound.

With *Wound Awareness Week 2020* now in full swing, it is the perfect time for people in high risk categories, as well as their family and friends, to get expert advice from:

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Pharmacists
- Podiatrists
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers
- Diabetes Educators
- Some physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and dieticians

For more information on *Wound Awareness Week 2020*, visit www.woundaware.com.au.

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