

Are you the one in 200 with haemochromatosis?

Despite being the most common genetic disorder in Australia, haemochromatosis is often underdiagnosed because people don't know about it and symptoms are general.

That's why Haemochromatosis Australia is running a social media campaign to raise awareness about the condition which is easy to test, simple to treat but tragic to ignore.

If you inherit the condition from parents, you absorb too much iron from food. This iron overloads body tissues, damages organs and can cause premature death.

Haemochromatosis is not a burden in your life if you get on to it early, and the treatment – giving blood – provides a benefit to others. The main symptoms are fatigue, aching joints and loss of libido. Early diagnosis is key to managing and reducing complications.

President of Haemochromatosis Australia Dr Dianne Prince urged young people to take action and ask their doctor for a blood test. Those of Irish and European descent are more at risk of carrying and inheriting haemochromatosis. One in seven people carry the condition, and it is equally likely in both sexes.

The hereditary condition is estimated to cost Australia's health system about \$280 million annually and add further cost burdens by compounding other chronic conditions when left undiagnosed and untreated.

"There are people with the condition who, in hindsight, should have been diagnosed decades earlier. This would have reduced the suffering, medical cost and even loss of life that results from iron overload," Dr Prince said.

"This has been confirmed by recent UK research that showed undiagnosed haemochromatosis quadruples the risk of liver disease, doubles risk of arthritis and causes higher risk of diabetes and chronic pain."

One such Australian is James Barclay from Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, who was not diagnosed until age 54 and now has liver cancer as a consequence of untreated haemochromatosis.

"James and his wife Anne have an important story to share and we thank them for being part of our ***Iron out your health*** awareness campaign," she said.

To find out if you might be rusting from within and need to iron out your health, visit the Haemochromatosis Australia website ha.org.au or view the awareness campaign videos here <https://www.youtube.com/user/HaemochromatosisAust> or on social media channels.

The official launch of the *Iron out your health* campaign by Dr Dianne Prince and Dr Dan Johnstone will be Wednesday February 27 at 10.30am, The University of Sydney's Liam Burke Seminar Room (formerly N248) in the Anderson Stuart Building.

Key points:

- Haemochromatosis is the most common genetic disorder in Australia
- If you are the 1 in 200 affected, it can cause serious health problems
- Ask your doctor, find out if you are storing too much iron

For information about Haemochromatosis Australia visit www.ha.org.au