



# MEDIA RELEASE

13 October 2008

## Women not aware of exercise options

A substantial number of women are not aware of the exercise facilities right at their doorstep, according to a Deakin University study.

Deakin University health expert and winner of a 2008 Victorian Tall Poppy Award, Associate Professor Kylie Ball, said this lack of awareness could be impacting on the level of physical activity undertaken by women and be putting their health at risk.

“We know physical activity is good for our health and that one factor that helps people be more active is having good access to things such as walking tracks, swimming pools and parks,” Associate Professor Ball said.

“However, the results of this study point to a lost opportunity for women to be involved in some form of exercise.

“With 42 per cent of women in this study overweight or obese and 25 per cent not getting enough exercise in their leisure time, it is unhealthy for them not be taking advantage of the exercise opportunities close to home.”

For the study, information was collected from 1540 women across 45 Melbourne neighbourhoods about the availability of public open space, gyms/sports centres, walking tracks, swimming pools, tennis courts, squash courts and golf courses within two kilometres of their homes.

The results showed that some groups of women were worse off than others when it came to identifying the facilities available.

“Younger (under 30 years) and older (over 50 years) women, women of lower income, those with low confidence in their ability to be active and those less active were the groups unable to accurately pin point facilities in their neighbourhood,” Associate Professor Ball said.

“For the over 50s this is particularly troubling since this is a group at risk of a range of chronic diseases associated with physical inactivity such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers.”

The study also revealed that one in four women did not know there was a swimming pool nearby; one in three was unaware of tennis courts and one in five did not know about a nearby gymnasium.

“The study suggests we need to do more as health professionals to increase people’s awareness of what is out there and available for them,” Associate Professor Ball said.

The study, “Mismatch between perceived and objective measures of physical activity environments”, was recently published in the international journal Preventive Medicine.

Ends

Associate Professor Kylie Ball is available for interview.

Media contact: Mandi O’Garretty, Deakin Media Unit, (03) 52272776, 0418 361 890

Issued by:

**Mandi O’Garretty**, Senior Media Officer  
Phone 03 5227 2776 Mobile 0418 361 890