

Vioxx users in action against drug company

By Court Reporter SEAN FEWSTER

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MORE than 500 South Australians are considering joining a class action over the controversial painkiller Vioxx.

Lawyers already organising a lawsuit for 12 South Australian users against drug manufacturer Merck say the case will be lodged with the Federal Court early next year.

New studies, meanwhile, show that taking as little as 25 milligrams of Vioxx per day can increase a person's chance of heart disease by 50 per cent.

Yesterday Peter Humphries, a partner with the Duncan Basheer Hannon firm, said his team was considering linking its action with lawsuits already lodged in the US.

"Over the next few weeks, we will be getting in touch with all the people who have contacted us in preparation for the case," Mr Humphries said.

"The response from South Australian users of the drug has been huge, and more people are calling every day."

Mr Humphries estimates between 300,000 and 500,000 people have used Vioxx nationally.

Studies show between 30,000 and 100,000 users worldwide have already suffered heart attacks and strokes.

On Wednesday, Merck appointed a special board committee to review its actions before the voluntary recall of Vioxx, to ensure it acted "in an appropriate and ethical manner".

"The committee will have the complete co-operation of Merck management and the full resources it needs to conduct its assessment," Merck president Raymond Gilmartin said.