

# Facts About the Heart

Know your  
Ticker



## Heart Facts

- Your heart is a muscle that pumps blood to all parts of the body
- Your body contains four to six litres of blood (dependant on your weight)
- Your body has a network of blood vessels, arteries & veins that carry the blood pumped by your heart
- Your heart is about the size of your clenched fist
- The blood pumped by the heart carries oxygen and nutrients to the cells and tissues and removes the waste products of metabolism

## Cardiovascular Disease: What happens?

Cardiovascular disease refers to problems with the heart and blood vessels (arteries & veins). The most common problems are heart attacks, strokes and blood vessel disease.

The first stage of coronary heart disease is a build up of plaque and cholesterol on artery walls – the arteries become narrower



Narrower arteries mean that less blood can flow through which may cause chest pain or angina.



If a piece of plaque breaks off from the artery wall it can become lodged in these narrow arteries, stopping blood flow and causing a heart attack. The severity of the heart attack will depend on the size of the blocked artery. The larger the artery, the more fatal the attack can be.



Blood clots can also disrupt blood flow. Those stopping blood flow to the brain cause a stroke. Part of the brain will die due to a lack of oxygen. The extent of damage can range from minor disability to death

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## What are the risk factors for developing Cardio Vascular Disease?

### Non – modifiable Risk Factors:

- **Family History:** Do you have a close family relative who has or had heart disease? If so you have a much higher risk of developing a heart condition.
- **Age:** As you get older, the risk of heart diseases increases.
- **Gender:** Up to the age of 50, men have a higher risk of heart disease than women. Hormones are thought to protect women until they reach menopause. After this, the risk is similar for men and women.

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## Modifiable Risk Factors:

- Physical inactivity
- Tobacco smoking
- High blood cholesterol
- Inadequate nutrition
- High Blood Pressure
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Being overweight
- High alcohol use

Most risk factors can be modified, which means that most heart disease can be prevented. This requires some simple, long term lifestyle changes.

## Australian Adults are at Risk....

The proportion of Australian adults with risk factors is high:

- 60% are overweight – 7.42 million adults
- 54% are not sufficiently active to achieve heart health benefits – 7.27 million adults
- 51% have high blood cholesterol – 6.40 million adults
- 30% have high blood pressure – 3.69 million adults
- 20% smoke daily – 3.06 million adults
- 10% drink at levels considered harmful – 1.54 million adults
- 8% have diabetes – 945,600 adults

## **Points to remember for a healthy heart**

For you to maintain a healthy heart, all you need to do is follow some simple steps to success:

- 1) Ensure your cholesterol levels are at a safe level (please visit your doctor to have your cholesterol level checked).
  - a. Control your cholesterol by:
    - i. decreasing intake of saturated fats
    - ii. eating more fruit, vegetables & fibre,
    - iii. avoiding highly processed foods, excess sugar and salt intake.
- 2) Lead an active lifestyle.
- 3) Limit or avoid alcohol intake.
- 4) Maintain the level of stress to a minimum.
- 5) Increase the amount of exercise you perform per day.
- 6) These changes will not only benefit your heart and body but will also increase your performance during the day so you can achieve more out of each day.

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## Heart Attack

A heart attack occurs when a coronary artery is suddenly blocked by a blood clot and the part of the heart muscle supplied by that artery is damaged because it is starved of oxygen.

### The warning signs:

- Squeezing, discomfort, pressure or pain in the centre of the chest or behind the breastbone lasting more than 10 to 15 minutes.
- Pain spreading to the shoulders, neck, jaw and/or arms.
- Discomfort in the upper body

### These symptoms may be accompanied by:

- Sweating, shortness of breath
- A sick feeling in the stomach
- Dizziness

### What to do if you experience any of the warning signs of heart attack:

- 1) Immediately stop what you are doing and rest.
- 2) If you are with someone, tell them what you are experiencing.
- 3) If your symptoms are severe, get worse quickly or last for 10 minutes (even if they are mild), this is an emergency. Get help fast. Call triple zero (000) and ask for the ambulance service.
- 4) Don't hang up. The operator will give you advice before the ambulance arrives.
5. If calling 000 does not work on your mobile, try 112.

If you are with someone who may be having a heart attack, take charge and follow the steps above. Stay with the person until the ambulance arrives.