

Heart disease



Number one cause of death in Australia.¹

No.1

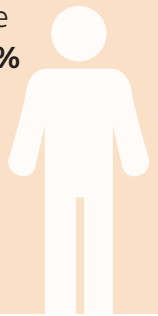


Heart disease was an underlying or contributing factor in nearly **1 in 4 deaths (22%)** in 2016.¹

Roughly **19,000** Australians (12% of all deaths) died from heart disease in 2016.¹



Men are more likely to be aware that heart disease is the top cause of death (**44% versus 25%** of women).²



What is it?

There are many different heart conditions. Ischaemic heart disease, or heart disease, is the most common form of cardiovascular disease and refers to conditions that involve a reduction of blood supply to the heart. This can lead to a heart attack, angina (chest pain) or stroke.

Heart disease is a broad, umbrella term that includes a range of heart-related conditions - blood vessel diseases, coronary artery disease, heart rhythm problems and congenital heart defects.

In the last decade, the number of deaths from heart disease has fallen by more than a third from 99.1 deaths per 100,000 in 2007 to 62.4 deaths in 2016.³ Despite this, heart attack claims around 22 lives per day.²

Warning signs

Warning signs of a heart attack can include one or more of the following symptoms and may vary in intensity: pain or tightness in the chest, difficulty breathing, breaking out in a cold sweat, dizziness, nausea, an aching jaw, discomfort in your neck, aching shoulder/shoulder blades/back and numb or tingling arms. In the event of warning signs, the Heart Foundation recommends calling 000 immediately.

Risk factors

A Heart Foundation study revealed that almost three-quarters (73%) of Australians, aged 30 to 65 years, have been told by their doctor they have at least one risk factor for heart disease.⁴ There is no single cause of heart disease but multiple contributing factors. Some risks are fixed and can't be changed but the good news is that many can.

Fixed risks

The risk of heart disease increases with age. Men are at a higher risk - it is the leading cause of death for males. Women are also highly susceptible to heart disease. A woman's risk grows after menopause and it is the second leading cause of death for females. Ethnicity and genetics can also play a role.

Variable risks

There are no surprises here - smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, consuming too much alcohol, diabetes, being inactive, being overweight, having an unhealthy diet, stress and depression all contribute to heart disease.

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Protect yourself: Minimise risk

The first step to protect yourself against heart disease is to understand your risk factors.

1. Many risk factors come down to lifestyle choice so a change in behaviour is likely to reduce your level of risk.
2. Maintain a healthy weight. If all Australians were in a normal weight range, the burden of heart disease would be reduced by 25%.
3. A heart health check, conducted by a doctor or health practitioner, is recommended for people over 45 years old. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the recommended age is 35. It involves a blood test, blood pressure check and a discussion about your lifestyle and family history.
4. Knowing your risk, consider whether you have adequate insurance (e.g. life, trauma, total & permanent disability, income protection) to protect what you value most in life.

1. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/3303.0~2016~Main%20Features~Australia's%20leading%20causes%20of%20death,%202016~3>
2. <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/about-us/heart-disease-in-australia/heart-attack-fact-sheet>
3. <https://www.heartresearch.com.au/heart-disease/what-is-heart-disease/>
4. National Heart Foundation, 2017. HeartWatch Survey.

This information is current as at September 2018. This article is intended to provide general information only and has been prepared without taking into account any particular person's objectives, financial situation or needs ('circumstances'). Before acting on such information, you should consider its appropriateness, taking into account your circumstances and obtain your own independent financial, legal or tax advice. You should read the relevant Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) before making any decision about a product. While all care has been taken to ensure the information is accurate and reliable, to the maximum extent the law permits. Personal Risk Professionals Pty. Ltd. are Authorised Representatives of Bombora Advice Pty Ltd ABN 40 156 250 565, AFSL 439065