



### WHAT IS A HEART HEALTH CHECK?

If you are 45 years or older (30 years or older if you identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) and have not had a heart attack or stroke, then you are eligible for a Heart Health Check.

A Heart Health Check is a regular checkup performed by your doctor, which attracts a Medicare rebate. The check helps you to understand your risk factors for heart disease and estimates how likely you are to have a heart attack or stroke in the next five years.

### WHY DO I NEED A HEART HEALTH CHECK?

Heart disease affects one in six Australians or 4.2 million people – and most people 65 years or over are currently living with a long-term heart condition.

Heart disease is the single leading cause of death in Australia, killing one Australian every 12 minutes. Heart disease claimed the lives of 12% of Australians in 2017, whilst it was an underlying and contributing cause in nearly one in four deaths.

### WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH HEART DISEASE?

Some risk factors associated with heart disease cannot be modified – these include:

- age
- gender
- Ethnicity
- genetic predisposition

There are risk factors that can be modified and include:

- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Weight
- Smoking
- Physical activity
- Diet
- Alcohol consumption

A number of these risk factors are shared with other chronic diseases, such as diabetes and chronic kidney disease. The interactions between these chronic conditions are complex and not well understood, however it is known that diabetes greatly increases the risk of heart disease. People with diabetes have twice the risk of developing heart disease as the general population. The prevalence rate of stroke can be up to five times greater, and prevalence of heart attack up to ten times greater, for people with diabetes than for those without diabetes.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO LOWER MY RISKS?

Depending on your result, your doctor may encourage you to keep doing what you are doing, or give you advice, information and support to make heart-healthy changes to your lifestyle, including changing your diet, doing more physical activity, quitting smoking or reducing the amount of alcohol you drink.

If your risk level is high, your doctor may prescribe medication to lower your blood pressure or cholesterol, or both.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au)

[www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)

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## WHAT CONDITIONS ARE CONSIDERED?

### CORONARY HEART DISEASE

Also known as ischaemic heart disease, this is the most common form of heart disease in Australia. The two major forms of coronary heart disease are heart attack (also known as acute myocardial infarction) and angina.

- A heart attack is caused when blood supply to the heart is blocked completely, often causing damage to the heart muscle and its function.
- Angina is a chronic condition where short episodes of chest pain occur periodically, caused by a temporary shortage of blood supply to the heart. Angina is not usually life-threatening, but can be associated with increased risk of heart attack.

### HEART FAILURE & CARDIOMYOPATHY

Heart failure is a life-threatening condition that occurs when the heart is unable to maintain a strong enough blood flow to meet the body's needs. It usually develops over many years, although it can also occur more suddenly. Heart failure can result in chronic tiredness, reduced ability for physical activity and shortness of breath. Cardiomyopathy occurs when the heart muscle becomes thickened, enlarged or stiff which can reduce the effectiveness of the heart. Cardiomyopathy and heart failure commonly occur together.

### CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE

A broad term for any defect of the heart or central blood vessels that is present from birth. It can include abnormalities of the heart or heart valves, such as a hole between chambers of the heart, or narrowing of major blood vessels, or combinations of disorders.

### PERIPHERAL VASCULAR DISEASE

This term refers to disease of large arteries that supply blood to the peripheries and can be caused by blockage of arteries due to cholesterol or fatty substances, or caused by widening of the arteries such as the aorta, which in severe cases can lead to rupture of the arterial wall.

### STROKE

Stroke is a type of cerebrovascular disease and occurs when an artery supplying blood to the brain either suddenly becomes blocked or begins to bleed. This may result in part of the brain dying, leading to sudden impairment of one or more capacities, such as speaking, thinking and/or movement.

Based on your Heart Health Check with Dr \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_/\_\_\_/2020

Your risk of heart disease in the next 5 years is: \_\_\_\_\_%

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