

## Peripheral Arterial Disease

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) occurs when blood flow in the blood vessels (arteries) that supply blood to the limbs, especially the legs and feet, is restricted. Many people with PAD don't have any warning signs or symptoms but are more likely to have atherosclerosis in arteries of the heart and brain.



## Cardiovascular disease

Heart, stroke and vascular disease is the leading cause of both premature death and disability in Australia.

*We aim to reduce death and disability from cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other health disorders related to obesity through research, clinical care, education and advocacy.*

### Recognising PAD by...

- ❏ Pain, numbness, aching and heaviness in the legs and buttocks during exercise (called "claudication")
- ❏ Cramping, slow healing and painful sores, and a weak or no pulse in the legs and feet.
- ❏ Poor nail and hair growth on toes and legs.
- ❏ Pale or blue skin color changes (indicating tissue death) that could eventually lead to gangrene and amputation.
- ❏ Different temperatures in each leg.
- ❏ Erectile dysfunction in men.

### Reducing the impact of cardiovascular disease

To relieve symptoms of, treat, or reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease:

- ❏ Enjoy a healthy eating plan and lifestyle, exercise regularly and don't smoke.
- ❏ Take medicines to lower cholesterol, blood pressure and the risk of clots forming to block arteries (e.g. aspirin) if required.
- ❏ Undergo surgery to re-open (e.g. angioplasty), repair or replace (e.g. bypass surgery) damaged arteries, if required.

**For more information contact  
Preventative Cardiology:**

**Freecall:** 1800 670 695

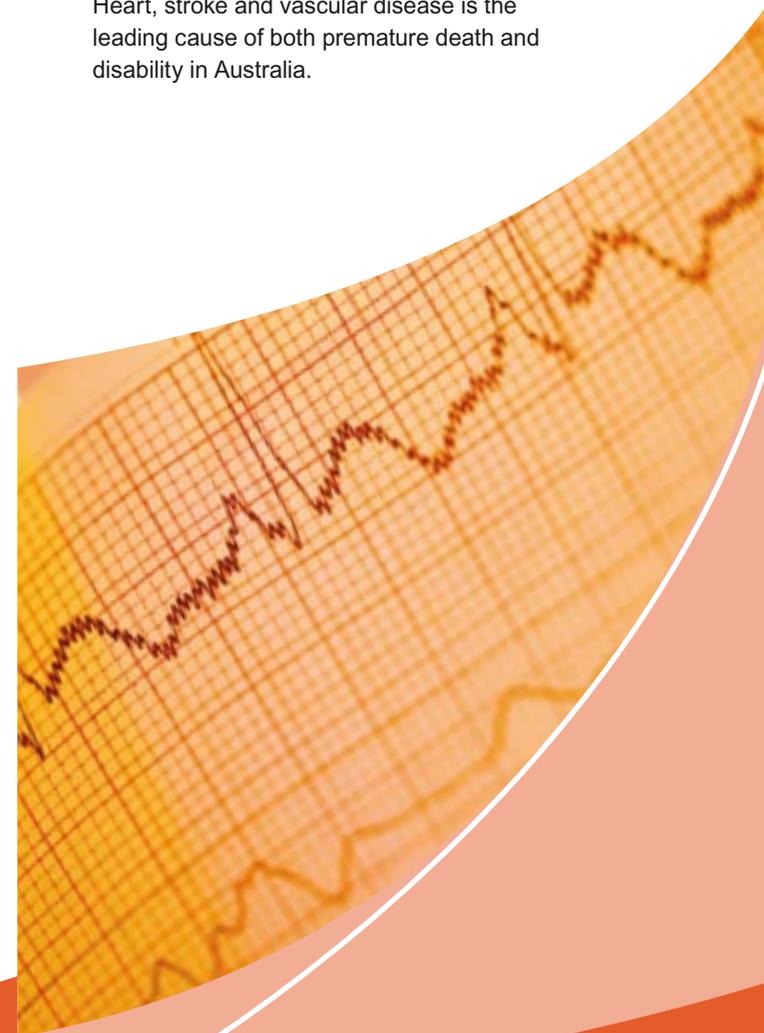
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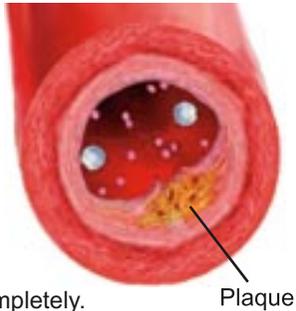


## The facts

In Australia, heart, stroke and vascular diseases cause over 50,000 deaths per year. The burden of disease is expected to increase over the coming decades due to our ageing population.

## What is cardiovascular disease?

Cardiovascular disease refers to a class of diseases that involve the heart and/or blood vessels (e.g. arteries). It is commonly related to atherosclerosis, a process whereby fatty deposits ("plaques") form in your arteries, causing them to narrow and possibly block completely.



When atherosclerosis affects the major arteries in the body it can cause a heart attack, stroke or peripheral arterial disease. By recognising the warning signs and symptoms and seeking medical care promptly, you may be able to avert or reduce the severity of a critical lack of blood supply to your heart (heart attack), brain (stroke) or hands and feet (peripheral arterial disease).

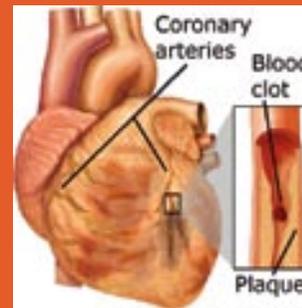
## Am I at risk of cardiovascular disease?

There are many risk factors linked to cardiovascular disease. Many of these can be addressed by adopting a healthy lifestyle.

- Smoking
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Excess weight
- Increasing age
- Kidney disease
- Family history of heart disease or stroke
- Male gender
- High blood cholesterol
- Physical inactivity
- Unhealthy eating
- High resting heart rate
- Depression and stress

## Heart attack

A heart attack occurs when a blood clot blocks the blood vessel (artery) that supplies blood to the heart muscle itself. Angina (temporary chest pain or discomfort) is often a warning sign of an impending heart attack!



### Recognising a heart attack by...

- Chest pain which may feel like tightness, pressure, heaviness, fullness or squeezing. It can range from mild to severe and occur suddenly or develop over minutes.
- Pain or discomfort in the neck and throat (causing a choking feeling), jaw, shoulders and back, left arm (causing a heavy and useless feeling) and into the wrist and hands.

Often, these symptoms are accompanied by:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sweating
- Dizziness and feeling light-headed
- A feeling of heartburn or indigestion
- Collapse

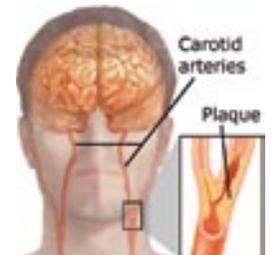
### Important information

If you or someone you are with gets symptoms of a heart attack or stroke, this is an emergency and must not be ignored. It is important to call triple zero (000) for an ambulance and get straight to a hospital – immediate action can save a life! Please seek medical advice if you experience or suffer any of the signs and symptoms listed on this brochure.

## Stroke

A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted by either:

- a blood clot blocking the blood vessel (artery) that supplies blood to the brain ("ischaemic stroke")
- a blood vessel in the brain bursting ("haemorrhagic stroke")



A transient ischaemic attack (TIA) is referred to as a "mini-stroke". TIAs disrupt blood flow to the brain caused by atherosclerosis or a tiny clot. TIA symptoms are similar to stroke but shorter; they are therefore a strong warning sign of an impending stroke.

If not treated promptly, a stroke can lead to immediate death or long-term disabilities including paralysis on one side of the body.

### Recognising a stroke or TIA by:

- Weakness, numbness or paralysis of the face or one or both arms or legs
- Trouble speaking or understanding
- Dizziness, loss of balance or unexplained fall
- Blurred or loss of vision in one or both eyes
- Sudden and severe headache, different to any usual pattern of headaches
- Difficulty swallowing
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness