



Cardiovascular disease



What is cardiovascular disease?

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are conditions that involve narrowed or blocked blood vessels that can lead to a heart attack, chest pain (angina) or stroke. Other heart conditions, such as those that affect your heart's muscle, valves or rhythm, also are forms of CVD, for example:

- > coronary heart disease
- > rheumatic heart disease
- > heart failure
- > cardiomyopathy
- > congenital heart disease
- > peripheral vascular disease

What causes CVD?

Atherosclerosis is the most common cause of cardiovascular disease. Fatty material, cholesterol and other substances can build up in the walls of your blood vessels. This is known as plaque, which thickens and stiffens artery walls and can obstruct blood flow through your arteries to your organs and tissues. If the plaque dislodges from the wall of a blood vessel it could cause a heart attack or stroke.

What are the risk factors?

1. Risk factors that can't be changed:

- > ageing
- > genetics/inherited
- > sex
- > ethnicity or background

2. Risk factors that can be changed:

- > smoking
- > lack of exercise
- > poor diet
- > drinking too much alcohol (more than one to two drinks per day)

3. If you have existing medical issues like:

- > high blood pressure
- > high blood cholesterol
- > diabetes
- > kidney disease
- > overweight or obese



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How do I reduce my risk of CVD?

- > If you smoke, try and quit
- > Be active everyday
- > Eat more fruit and vegetables
- > Limit alcohol intake
- > Take all of your prescribed medications
- > Check your blood glucose levels regularly
- > Get your doctor or health worker to check your blood pressure at each visit
- > Maintain a healthy weight range

For more information

Contact your local Aboriginal Medical Service or Health worker. Aboriginal Chronic Care workers are located in NSW Health Services and some Aboriginal Medical Services.

PDF's can be downloaded and printed from Chronic Care for Aboriginal People Program:
www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/networks/ccap

Email: ACI-CCAP@health.nsw.gov.au

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Facts

- > Aboriginal people are around twice as likely to be affected by heart disease as other Australians.
- > Aboriginal people are more likely to die from CVD when they're young or in middle age than non-Aboriginal people.

Free services

- > **Get Healthy Service**
Call the 'Get Healthy Service' for free personal telephone coaching to support you with your physical activity goals'. Your free NSW Health service provides the expertise and motivation you need to help reach your goals.
www.gethealthynsw.com.au
or call 1300 806 258
- > **NSW Health Make Healthy Normal**
www.makehealthynormal.nsw.gov.au



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Published Sep 2016. Next review 2024.
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