

The background is a complex, layered artwork. It features a large, textured heart shape in shades of red, orange, and purple. Overlaid on this are several figures: a person in a white lab coat on the left, and two other people in the center and right. The overall style is painterly and abstract, with a focus on human figures and health-related symbols.

# Heart, stroke and vascular diseases

Australian facts  
**2001**



# Heart, stroke and vascular diseases

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National Centre for Monitoring Cardiovascular Disease

April 2001

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

National Heart Foundation of Australia

National Stroke Foundation of Australia

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Australian facts

2001

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## AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

### Board Chair

Professor Janice Reid

### Director

Dr Richard Madden

## FEEDBACK

The Institute welcomes feedback from users on any aspect of this publication. Comments, suggestions or requests for further information may be directed to:

### Dr Tim Armstrong

Cardiovascular Disease and Risk Factor Monitoring Unit

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

GPO Box 570

Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6244 1129

Fax: (02) 6244 1044

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# Preface

## Preface

The epidemic of heart attack, stroke and other forms of vascular disease has been a prominent and constant challenge to the health of Australians and remains so as we begin the new century.

Despite major falls in death rates from these problems over the past 30 years, collectively they are still Australia's leading cause of premature death and disability.

There is a continuing need to inform the public, health professionals and policy makers about the considerable scope for prevention, progress in treatment and care, and the areas and groups of people that may need more attention.

This report aims to achieve this. Written and presented in a readable style and format, *Heart, Stroke and Vascular Diseases—Australian Facts 2001* provides statistics and information about:

- ◆ levels of, and trends in, heart, stroke and vascular diseases;
- ◆ how Australia compares on the international stage;
- ◆ contributing risk factors; and
- ◆ treatment, health care and costs.

This second report builds on the very successful first issue, produced in 1999, which was well received for the quality of its information and its presentation. This update incorporates extensive feedback from a wide field of relevant experts and includes several new features.

The series is produced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in collaboration with the National Heart Foundation of Australia. On this occasion, the National Stroke Foundation of Australia has been a significant contributor, as has the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. The International Diabetes Institute provided access to recent risk factor and diabetes data collected in the AusDiab survey, in which it played the lead role. The report shows the benefit of collaborative effort to improve the health of Australians.

*Heart, Stroke and Vascular Diseases—Australian Facts 2001* was produced by staff of the National Centre for Monitoring Cardiovascular Disease, based within the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and funded largely by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

The report is also available on the Institute's web site (<http://www.aihw.gov.au>).

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# Contributors

## Contributors

This publication has been prepared by staff of the National Centre for Monitoring Cardiovascular Disease at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare:

Tim Armstrong

Stan Bennett

Joanne Davies

Jacqueline Grau

Trent Harlow

Gabrielle Hodgson

Toni Hunt

Sushma Mathur

Belinda Riddle

Susana Senes

The following individuals also contributed to sections of this publication:

Adrian Bauman                      School of Community Medicine,  
University of New South Wales

Steve Bunker                        National Heart Foundation of Australia

Mark Cooper-Stanbury            Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Helen Dewey                        National Stroke Research Institute

David Dunstan                      International Diabetes Institute

Geoff Marks                         Australian Food and Nutrition Monitoring Unit

Jonathan Shaw                      International Diabetes Institute

Trevor Shilton                      on behalf of the National Physical Activity Program  
Committee, National Heart Foundation of Australia

Andrew Tonkin                     National Heart Foundation of Australia

Paul Zimmet                         International Diabetes Institute

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Bart Currie	National Heart Foundation of Australia
Jeff Flack	Diabetes Centre, Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital
Graham Hankey	Department of Neurology, Royal Perth Hospital
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Elena Mobilia	Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Ruth Penm	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Ian Ring	Queensland Health
Lyn Roberts	National Heart Foundation of Australia
Rowena Robinson	Department of Health and Aged Care
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Louis Young	Department of Health and Aged Care

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# Highlights

VIII

## Highlights

### **Cardiovascular disease continues to place a heavy burden on Australians...**

- ◆ In Australia, cardiovascular disease kills more people than any other disease and creates enormous costs for the health care system. These issues are expected to become more acute over the next decades with the growing number of elderly Australians, among whom cardiovascular disease is most common.

#### **in terms of deaths...**

- ◆ Cardiovascular disease was the leading cause of death among Australians in 1998, accounting for 50,797 deaths (40% of all deaths).
- ◆ Coronary heart disease (mainly heart attacks) was the leading single cardiovascular cause of death, accounting for 27,825 deaths (22% of all deaths) in Australia in 1998.
- ◆ Stroke was Australia's second greatest single killer after coronary heart disease, claiming 11,982 lives in 1998 (9% of all deaths). It is the leading cause of long-term disability in adults.

#### **hospitalisations...**

- ◆ In 1998–99, there were 437,717 hospitalisations where cardiovascular disease was the principal diagnosis (7% of all hospitalisations).
- ◆ The average length of stay in hospital for cardiovascular conditions fell from 7.6 days in 1993–94 to 5.5 days in 1998–99.

#### **health care costs to the community...**

- ◆ Cardiovascular disease is the most costly disease for the health system in Australia. It was responsible for 12% (\$3.9 billion) of total recurrent health expenditure in 1993–94. Cardiovascular conditions consuming most health system resources were coronary heart disease (\$894 million), high blood pressure (\$831 million) and stroke (\$630 million).

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**and future risks.**

- ◆ For a 40-year-old, the risk of having coronary heart disease at some time in their future life is one in two for men and one in three for women.
- ◆ For a 45-year-old, the risk of having a stroke before age 85 is one in four for men and one in five for women.

**The burden is most acute among certain Australians...**

- ◆ Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples die from cardiovascular disease at twice the rate of other Australians. The difference is even greater among those aged 25–64 where Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' death rates were seven and ten times those of other Australian men and women, respectively.
- ◆ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have one of the highest rates of rheumatic heart disease in the world, at 13.3 per 1,000 population in 1999. In comparison, among other Australians, the rate is 0.34 per 1,000.
- ◆ People in lower socioeconomic groups are more likely to die from cardiovascular disease compared with people in higher socioeconomic groups. In 1997, people aged 25–64 living in the most disadvantaged group died from cardiovascular disease at around twice the rate of those living in the least disadvantaged group.

**but much of the burden caused by cardiovascular disease is preventable.**

- ◆ In 1995, more than 10 million adult Australians (over 80% of the adult population) had at least one of the following cardiovascular risk factors: tobacco smoking, physical inactivity, high blood pressure, or overweight. About four in five men and three in four women had at least one of these risk factors.
- ◆ In 1998, almost 3.5 million (22%) Australians aged 14 years and over smoked on a regular basis.

# Highlights

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## Highlights

- ◆ More than 5.8 million adult Australians (43% of the population) did not undertake physical activity at the levels recommended to achieve a health benefit in 1999.
- ◆ In 1999–00, over seven million adult Australians (aged 25 and over) were overweight (BMI  $\geq$  25). Of these over two million (20% of the population aged 25 and over) were obese (BMI  $\geq$  30). The prevalence of both overweight and obesity has increased dramatically since 1980.
- ◆ In 1999–00, almost three million Australians (aged 25 and over) had high blood pressure or were on medication for that condition. High blood pressure increases the risk of cardiovascular disease by two to four times.
- ◆ In 1999–00, over six million Australian adults (aged 25 years and over) had blood cholesterol levels higher than 5.5 mmol/L, the upper limit recommended by the National Heart Foundation of Australia.

### **Favourable trends in some risk factors...**

- ◆ The proportion of Australians (aged 25–64 years) with high blood pressure has declined since 1980.
- ◆ Smoking has declined since the 1970s, although the decline has slowed in recent years.
- ◆ The proportion of Australian adult males (aged 25–64 years) with high blood cholesterol has declined slightly since 1989.

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# Highlights

## **and advances in medical treatment and care should lead to improved outcomes.**

- ◆ In 1998–99, there were 74,289 coronary angiograms performed. Coronary angiography gives a picture of the heart's arteries and is used to diagnose coronary heart disease.
- ◆ During 1998 there were 22,253 heart surgery procedures. By far the most common heart operation was coronary artery bypass grafting at 17,448 procedures.
- ◆ There were 18,094 coronary angioplasty procedures performed in 1998. Stents were inserted in 82% of these procedures. This represents a 31% increase in their use since the previous year.
- ◆ A total of 26,114 computerised tomography (CT) scans of the head were performed for stroke during 1998–99. During 1997–98 there were 4,515 carotid endarterectomies performed for stroke.
- ◆ More than 43.4 million prescriptions for cardiovascular drugs were dispensed in the community in 1998. This represents almost a quarter of all prescriptions.

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