



Australian Government

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

Living dangerously

Australians with multiple risk factors for cardiovascular disease

Highlights

The relationship between cardiovascular disease and nine risk factors was investigated using self-reported data collected in the 2001 National Health Survey. From this analysis it was estimated that:

- Around nine in ten Australian adults had at least one risk factor.
- Poor diet and physical inactivity were the most prevalent risk factors.
- Regardless of age, people were most likely to have two risk factors.
- People in the most disadvantaged socioeconomic group were more likely than people in the least disadvantaged socioeconomic group to have three or more risk factors.
- People who had more risk factors were also more likely to report ever having had a heart attack, stroke, angina or atherosclerosis— independent of age and sex.

Introduction

The prevalence of risk factors (see Box 1) in the population is frequently considered in isolation. However, there is evidence that while risk factors are independent predictors of disease—that is, the presence of each one on its own increases the risk of illness—they also have an interactive effect. The risk of illness for a person with a particular factor is increased by the presence of additional risk factors.

This bulletin provides a summary of the risk factor profile of Australian adults—focusing on risk factors for cardiovascular disease—both individually and in combination. The prevalence of multiple risk factors is described according to age, sex and socioeconomic status and

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