

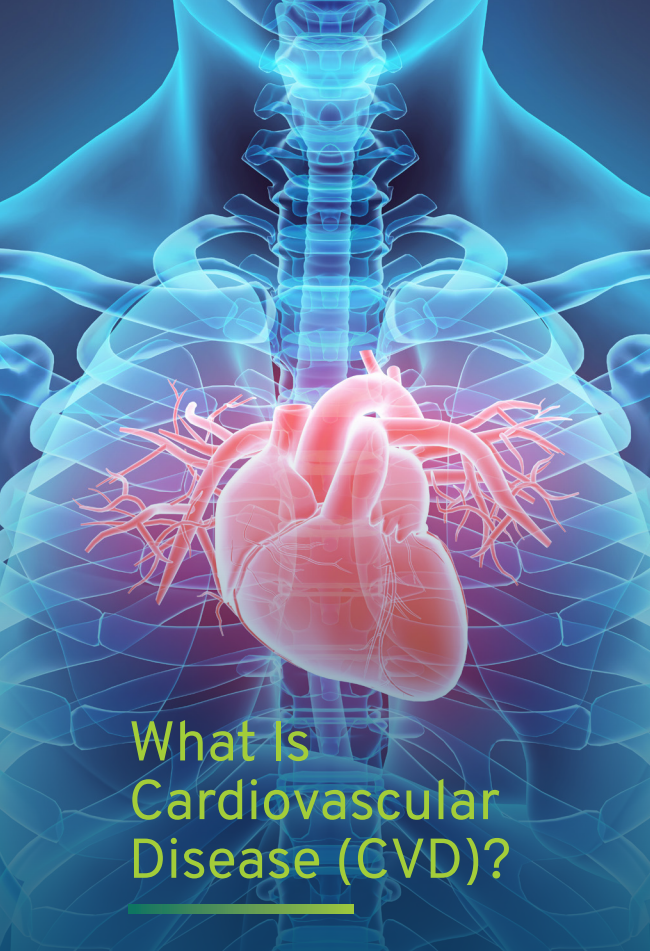


Men's Health Week

Understanding and Protecting Your Heart

Whether you're on the front line or working behind a radio, your heart works just as hard as you do. With Men's Health Week upon us, it's the perfect time to focus on one of the biggest health issues facing Australian men: cardiovascular disease.





What Is Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)?

Cardiovascular disease refers to a group of disorders affecting the heart and blood vessels. In Australia, it's one of the leading causes of death—and men are particularly at risk. It includes conditions like heart attacks, stroke, and most commonly, **Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)**.

CAD happens when your heart's blood supply lines (arteries) slowly become clogged. This is caused by a gradual build-up of plaque made from fat, cholesterol, and other materials. Over time, these “traffic jams” narrow your arteries and restrict blood flow. When this happens, you might feel chest pain or tightness, get short of breath doing things that used to be easy, or in severe cases, experience a heart attack.

One of the most dangerous aspects of heart disease is how **slowly and silently it develops**. Many men dismiss the early signs—assuming it's just ageing or a lack of fitness. But ignoring these signs can be a deadly mistake.

Why It Matters to You

Emergency services personnel often face **high levels of physical stress**, irregular sleep, and challenging situations. Combine that with factors like shift work, poor nutrition on the go, or smoking, and the risk of cardiovascular issues climbs even higher.

Whether you're 25 or 65, it's never too early—or too late—to check in with your heart.

Know the Warning Signs

Not all heart problems come with a dramatic chest clutch like in the movies. Here's what to look out for:



Shortness of breath doing activities you used to handle easily



Chest discomfort or tightness



Unexplained fatigue



Irregular or racing heartbeat



Pain in your arm, neck, jaw, or back



Dizziness or light-headedness

If you experience these symptoms, especially during or after physical exertion, **seek medical advice immediately**. Don't “tough it out.”



Risk Factors – What’s in Your Control?

According to the **Heart Foundation of Australia**, several lifestyle and medical factors contribute to cardiovascular risk. Here are the key ones:

MODIFIABLE RISKS

- Smoking
- Lack of physical activity
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- High blood pressure
- Poor diet
- High stress levels
- High cholesterol
- Obesity or being overweight

NON-MODIFIABLE RISKS

- Age (risk increases after 45)
- Family history of heart disease
- Ethnic background

Heart Health Checklist – What You Can Do Today

- ✓ Book a **heart health check** with your GP (recommended every 2 years from age 45, or from 30 if you’re Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)
- ✓ Keep an eye on your **blood pressure and cholesterol**
- ✓ Get enough **sleep** and manage your stress
- ✓ Quit or reduce **smoking**
- ✓ Aim for **at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise** most days
- ✓ Limit **alcohol** intake (no more than 10 standard drinks a week)
- ✓ Eat a heart-friendly diet – more whole foods, less processed junk
- ✓ Talk to your mates – mental health and heart health are closely linked

Support and Resources

- **Heart Foundation** – heartfoundation.org.au
- **Australian Government Heart Health Checks** – health.gov.au
- Speak to **Wellbeing Support** about resources available to you – wellbeing@dpfem.com.au
- Visit **MyPulse** to check in on your mental and physical health today www.mypulse.com.au

Final Thought:

Vigilance Beats Complacency

Cardiovascular disease often creeps in quietly—like a slowing in your stamina or a few too many skipped health checks. But just because it’s common doesn’t mean it’s inevitable. With the right knowledge and a proactive approach, you can outpace this silent threat and protect your most vital piece of equipment: your heart.



Visit www.mypulse.com.au and complete a health screen today

