

# KEEPING THE HEART BEATING AND THE METER TICKING A CLOSER LOOK AT HEART DISEASE

Chances are every driver will know someone who has suffered, or suffers from, coronary heart disease. It is the leading single cause of death in Australia. In 2008, more than 23,600 Australians lost their lives to the disease.

The good news is that, unlike some other conditions, there are a lot of things you can do to reduce your chance of developing it.

Coronary heart disease occurs when your coronary arteries (the arteries that supply the blood and oxygen to your heart muscle) become clogged with a fatty material that doctors call 'plaque' or 'atheroma'.

In the same way that dental plaque building up can do damage to your teeth, the slow build up of plaque or atheroma on the inner walls of your arteries slowly causes them to narrow. This process is called 'atherosclerosis'.

This is a process that can start when people are quite young and can be well advanced by middle age.

This may lead to symptoms such as angina. If a blood clot forms in the narrowed artery and completely blocks the blood supply to part of your heart, it can cause a heart attack.

Research has shown that men have a higher risk than women of developing coronary heart disease in middle age. The risk increases as you age. There is no single cause for coronary heart disease, but there are a number of risk factors that increase your chance of developing it.

The experts tell us that by following a healthy lifestyle and taking medicines as prescribed by your doctor, you can reduce or remove risk factors and reduce your overall risk of developing coronary heart disease.

## WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT?

The Heart Foundation advice is that there are a number of risk factors that we can all do something about. By reducing these risk factors you can reduce the risk of developing heart disease, and in turn the possibility of angina and heart attack.

These 'modifiable' risk factors include:

- smoking - both active smoking and being exposed to second-hand smoke
- high blood cholesterol
- high blood pressure
- diabetes
- physical inactivity
- being overweight
- depression, social isolation and a lack of social support

Watching what you eat, making sure you get regular exercise, staying away from cigarette smoke, dropping some kilos, following advice

from your doctor and good mental health will all help you to lower your risk of developing the disease.

## WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS YOU CAN'T CHANGE?

Risk factors that you can't change include:

- increasing age
- being male
- having a family history of heart disease

You can reduce your overall risk of developing coronary heart disease by leading a healthy lifestyle and taking medicines as prescribed by your doctor.

## HEALTHY LIFE, HEALTHY HEART

Health professionals know that regular physical activity is the key to good overall health, for taxi drivers it can be hard to find the time to get active but there are a huge number of reasons why you should.

Regular physical activity will:

- Improve your long-term health
- Reduce your risk of heart attack
- Give you more energy
- Help you to manage your weight
- Help you to achieve a healthier total blood cholesterol level
- Lower your blood pressure
- Make your bones and muscles stronger
- Make you feel more confident, happy and relaxed
- Help you to sleep better





**THE EXPERTS TELL US THAT BY FOLLOWING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AND TAKING MEDICINES AS PRESCRIBED BY YOUR DOCTOR, YOU CAN REDUCE OR REMOVE RISK FACTORS AND REDUCE YOUR OVERALL RISK OF DEVELOPING CORONARY HEART DISEASE.**



## WOULD YOU RECOGNISE A HEART ATTACK?

According to the Heart Foundation, you might have just one of these symptoms, or you may have a combination of them.

Symptoms can come on suddenly or develop over minutes and get progressively worse. Symptoms usually last for at least 10 minutes.

1. Discomfort or pain in the centre of your chest – this can often feel like a heaviness, tightness or pressure. People who have had a heart attack have commonly described it as like an “elephant sitting on my chest” or “a belt that’s been tightened around my chest.” The discomfort may spread to different parts of your upper body.
2. Discomfort in the upper body – you might have a choking feeling in your throat, or your arms might feel heavy or useless.
3. Other symptoms might include shortness of breath, nauseous, a cold sweat, and a feeling of dizziness or light-headedness.

Remember, the warning signs of heart attack can vary and it is quite common to experience a combination of warning signs. If you have heart attack warning signs get help fast.

### WHERE TO GET HELP

- Call an ambulance on triple 0 in the case of an emergency
- Your doctor or other health professional
- Community health centre
- For more information on depression, visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) or talk to your GP

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- There is no single thing that causes coronary heart disease, but several risk factors that contribute to it.
- You can reduce your risk of developing coronary heart disease by reducing or removing the modifiable risk factors, such as smoking, high total blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, being physically inactive, being overweight, diabetes, depression and social isolation.
- Take any medicines as prescribed by your doctor.

For further information  
[www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)



**1800 336 911**

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Established in 1998 and specifically for the Taxi Industry, the Taxi Industry Superannuation Fund serves the financial planning requirements of drivers, owners and operators.

The fund is designed to help Industry participants to save for a financially secure retirement, while also providing financial protection such as income and death/disability insurance.

Contributions can be made by employers or self-employed members, or drivers as well as their spouses.

Over 2,500 members are offered a choice of 13 strategies and our Fund has grown rapidly to cover \$13 million worth of assets under management.

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