



Health Notes

from the Lilydale Pharmacy

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Heart and blood vessel disease

Heart and blood vessel disease, known medically as cardiovascular disease, remains Australia's number one killer and is responsible for 37% of all deaths in Australia. While this is very high, it has actually fallen a little in recent years – due mainly to blood pressure control and better survival in hospitals after treatment of heart attacks.

However, 90% of adults have at least one risk factor which can be treated.

60% are overweight. (this has doubled in the last 20 years)

54% are not sufficiently active to achieve health benefits.

51% have high blood cholesterol

30% have high blood pressure

20% smoke daily

10% drink at levels that are harmful to their health.

8% have diabetes. (this has doubled in the last 20 years)

'When it's a heart attack, every minute counts'. A squeezing pain or discomfort in the chest lasting for more than 10-15 minutes and spreading to the shoulders, neck or arms may indicate a heart attack. Sometimes these symptoms are accompanied by sweating, shortness of breath and a sick feeling in the stomach. Women tend to have different symptoms to men. Women become short of breath, fatigued and complain of an awareness or a pressure in their chest or arms rather than the crushing chest pain experienced by most men. Failure to recognise the symptoms results in a delay to receive adequate treatment. The average delay for a man is about 45 minutes to an hour while the majority of women wait four to eight days. Australian women are five times more likely to die of heart disease than breast cancer yet new research has found that most women often don't recognise the symptoms of a heart attack until it's too late.

Don't delay, dial 000 and get to a hospital.

If you need medicines to lower your blood pressure or cholesterol levels, it is possible they will need to be taken forever. Sometimes that is difficult to accept; especially when there may be no noticeable symptoms of the high blood pressure or cholesterol. Occasionally the medicines themselves have unwanted effects.

If side effects with your medicines do occur, you should tell your doctor and pharmacist. There may be other medicines that suit you better or another way to manage the problem.

Lifestyle changes, which involve diet and exercise, can reduce the need for medicines, or maybe lower the doses needed. These are all outlined in free Self Care Health Information Fact Cards available from the pharmacy. Titles include Exercise and the Heart, High Blood Pressure, Fat and Cholesterol, Weight and Health, and Staying a Non-Smoker.

We can also assist by measuring your blood pressure in the Pharmacy, and monitoring it on a regular basis. We can help you quit smoking with nicotine patches or gum.

The Heart Foundation last year published a statement which concluded that depression, social isolation and a lack of good social support were as important in increasing the risk of heart disease as blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Obesity is becoming a worldwide problem with studies predicting that obesity will soon surpass smoking as the leading cause of premature death in the UK.

Some experts have predicted the current generation of children will have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.