



What is a

Heart Health Check?

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A Heart Health Check is a 20-minute check-up with your GP. It can help you understand your chance of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 5 years and what you can do to prevent it.

1. Discuss

Your GP or nurse may ask about:

- whether you smoke
- whether you have diabetes
- medicines you are taking
- other health problems
- your family health history
- ethnic groups you identify with
- your postcode.

2. Check

Your GP or nurse may check your:

- blood pressure
- cholesterol
- blood sugar levels.

3. Assess

Your GP will work out your chance of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 5 years, using a clinically validated calculator.

4. Plan

Your GP or nurse will work with you to set a plan to lower your risk of heart attack or stroke. This may involve:

- ways to make heart-healthy changes to your lifestyle
- referrals to programs or other health professionals for more support e.g. dietitians
- prescribing blood pressure or cholesterol lowering medicines.



Why should you get a Heart Health Check?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Australia. Many heart attacks and strokes can be prevented through healthy behaviours like eating a heart-healthy diet, being active, maintaining a healthy weight and being smoke free. Many people may not know their risk of developing heart disease, especially since you often can't feel risk factors like high blood pressure and cholesterol.

Having a Heart Health Check is an important first step to protecting your heart.



Who needs a Heart Health Check?

- All people aged 45–79 years
- People with diabetes from 35 years
- First Nations people from 30 years

Speak to your GP about a Heart Health Check if you do not already have heart disease.



How much does a Heart Health Check cost?

Heart Health Checks are covered by Medicare and are free at practices that bulk bill this service.

Ask your GP about the cost of your Heart Health Check before your visit.

What can you do now to improve your heart health?

Enjoy a heart-healthy eating pattern

This includes:

- Plenty of vegetables, fruits and wholegrains.
- A variety of healthy protein-rich foods especially fish and seafood, legumes (such as beans and lentils), nuts and seeds.
- Unflavoured milk, yoghurt and cheese. People with high blood cholesterol should choose reduced fat varieties.
- Healthy fats and oils, such as avocados, olives, nuts, seeds, and healthy oils for cooking.
- Herbs and spices to flavour foods, instead of adding salt.

Maintain a healthy weight

Maintaining a healthy body weight can help lower your blood pressure and cholesterol and improve your heart health.

If you need to lose weight, speak with your GP about how to do it in a healthy way.

Be active

Start with small, realistic goals and work your way up to the recommended 30-60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (such as brisk walking) on most days of the week.

Be smoke-free and limit alcohol

If you smoke, quit smoking. For support to quit smoking, talk with your GP or call the Quitline (13 7848 or quit.org.au). Drink no more than 10 standard drinks per week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day.



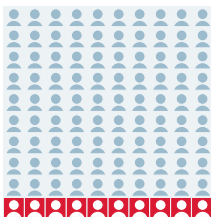
What do your Heart Health Check results mean?

Your results will show your chance of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 5 years. This helps you and your doctor decide what actions to take to lower your risk.

High risk

(10% or more)

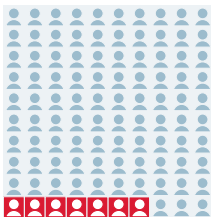
This means in 100 people like you, 10 or more will have a heart attack or stroke in the next 5 years if they don't take action.



Intermediate risk

(more than 5% but less than 10%)

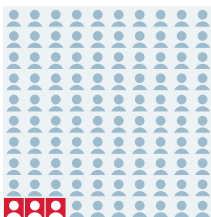
This means in 100 people like you, more than 5 but less than 10 will have a heart attack or stroke in the next 5 years if they don't take action.



Low risk

(less than 5%)

This means in 100 people like you, less than 5 will have a heart attack or stroke in the next 5 years if they don't take action.



You and your GP or nurse will make a plan for lifestyle changes and/or medicines that are recommended for you.

Your GP or nurse will let you know how often you need to have a follow-up Heart Health Check.

For more information, visit
heartfoundation.org.au

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