

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Member blog – Cardiovascular health

The following health and wellbeing blog has been prepared by TAL for use by partner superannuation funds for their members. It is available to use in white-label format for communications and is designed to provide information for members on positive ways to support their physical health.

-BLOG-

Steps to a healthy heart

Cardiovascular disease is one of the biggest health issues facing Australians today, but did you know there are some simple steps you can take to help look after your heart? Dr Priya Chagan, General Manager Health Services at our insurance partner [TAL](#), shares information on cardiovascular disease and ways we can look after our heart health.

1. Diet matters

A poor diet is one of the leading risk factors for heart disease. A diet that's good for your heart, isn't about strict, restrictive eating but making small positive changes that you can stick to long term.

Key things to include in your diet for good heart health:

- Plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Wholegrains
- A variety of healthy protein especially oily fish, legumes, nuts and seeds
- Healthy fat choices like avocados, olives and their oils for cooking
- Add herbs and spices to cooking for flavour instead of salt.

Some of the things you should avoid or keep to a minimum include:

- Alcohol
- Processed foods
- Red meat
- Fried foods
- Food high in salt or sugar.

2. Stay active

Regular exercise reduces heart disease risk factors like obesity, high blood pressure and cholesterol. But you don't have to slog it out at the gym. Instead, choose activities that you enjoy that will make it easier to stick to an active lifestyle. Even incidental exercise can really make a difference. Choose to take the stairs instead of the lift or park your car a little further away so

you can get in some extra steps. Before you know it, staying active will be a regular part of your daily routine.

3. **Be smoke-free**

Smoking damages blood vessels and increases your likelihood of dying from a heart attack or stroke. The sooner you quit, the better. Your risk of heart attack and stroke decreases almost straight away so there's no time like the present to take a major step to better heart health. If you're a smoker and need help to quit, talk to your GP or contact the smoking [Quitline](#)¹ in your state for support.

4. **Manage your cholesterol and blood pressure**

Maintaining your cholesterol and blood pressure within healthy levels is an important contributor to heart health. You can have high blood pressure and cholesterol without having any obvious symptoms, so it's important to see your doctor for a check-up. The good news is that a healthy lifestyle that promotes heart health, also has a positive effect on blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

If you're 45 and over, or 30 and over if you're of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, you should ensure you have a regular [Heart Health Check](#) with your GP. This 20-minute check will assess your risk of having a heart attack or stroke and provide a plan to manage and reduce your risks.

5. **Watch for the signs**

Warning signs for heart attack can vary from person to person. It's important to be aware of the common signs so that you can get help fast. Acting quickly can reduce the damage to your heart and increase chances of survival. Some common heart attack warning signs² are:

- Chest discomfort or pain (angina). This can feel like uncomfortable pressure, aching, numbness, squeezing, fullness or pain in your chest. This discomfort can spread to your arms, neck, jaw or back. It can last for several minutes or come and go
- Dizziness, light-headedness, feeling faint or feeling anxious
- Nausea, indigestion, vomiting
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing – with or without chest discomfort
- Sweating or a cold sweat.

Heart attack symptoms may be different for each person and no two heart attacks are the same so it's important not to ignore any potential warning signs and seek help fast.

If you or someone around you experiences these symptoms, call triple zero (000) right away and ask for an ambulance.

1. [Department of Health and Aged Care](#)
2. [Heart Foundation](#)

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DISCLAIMER [please add to your post]

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