

Every *heart*



AUTUMN EDITION

COVER STORY
JUMP ROPE FOR HEART
Passing the rope to the
next generation

**A NEW HOPE
FOR RHEUMATIC
HEART DISEASE**
Research to help protect
children from lifelong
heart damage

Our hearts together



As I look back on our recent progress, I'm excited to share just some of the many ways you're making a bold impact on heart health across Australia. And this time, you might notice something new – we've given our newsletter a fresh new name.

Hello and welcome to the very first edition of *Every Heart*.

With the new year now well underway, we've been making real strides towards our vision for 2050 – a future where heart health will be achievable by everyone in Australia. With you by our side, we're more committed than ever to ensuring that every heart has the chance to thrive.

Inside these pages, you'll discover exactly how your support is powering this future. You'll meet inspiring people and programs: school kids skipping for heart health, communities learning CPR, and one researcher driving breakthroughs that could change the future of cardiac care.

From classrooms to communities to cutting-edge research – health for every heart begins with you.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the *Every Heart* newsletter – and thank you sincerely for being at the heart of everything we do.

David Lloyd

Chief Executive Officer
Heart Foundation

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Support at your fingertips

Online support groups helping people connect and live well with heart disease

Thanks to advances in treatment and awareness, more people in Australia are surviving heart events and living with the long-term impacts of heart disease. For many, recovery doesn't end at diagnosis or discharge – it's just the beginning.

More than 4.5 million people in Australia live with cardiovascular disease, and many more are caring for someone impacted. From navigating complex health information, to lifestyle changes, and the fear of another heart event – the emotional toll can be overwhelming.

To help people live well with heart disease, the Heart Foundation offers two free, online peer support communities. These moderated communities offer a welcoming and supportive space where members can share experiences, talk through challenges, and celebrate wins.



MyHeart MyLife

A community for all adults across Australia living with a heart condition, and their carers.

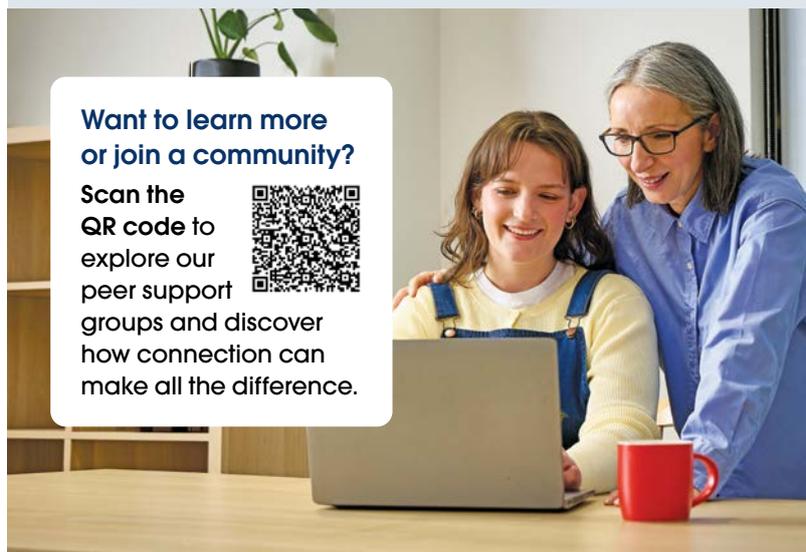


Supporting Young Hearts

A community for young adults living with a heart condition, and their carers, creating a space to connect with others at a similar stage of life.

Beyond connecting with others, members can also access expert Q&A sessions and practical wellbeing resources – giving them the tools and confidence to help manage their heart health every day.

Whether you're personally impacted by heart disease or simply passionate about helping others, your support is helping people feel connected and confident through their heart health journey.



Want to learn more or join a community?

Scan the QR code to explore our peer support groups and discover how connection can make all the difference.



Would you know how to help save someone in cardiac arrest?

How Heart of the Nation is helping communities build life-saving confidence



A cardiac arrest can strike without warning. When it does, every second counts. Whether at home, work, or out in the community, the first few minutes are crucial, and knowing how to respond could help save a life.

Cardiac arrest is a life-threatening heart event. But performing CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and using an AED (automated external defibrillator) can drastically improve survival rates. However, many people in Australia don't feel confident enough to step in during a cardiac arrest. Even those who are willing to help are often held back by fear or lack of confidence.

That's the challenge our **Heart of the Nation** program is working to change.

To help improve cardiac arrest survival rates, Heart of the Nation is currently piloting free CPR and AED awareness sessions in four local government areas in NSW. These pilot sessions mark the beginning of a national initiative to help equip everyday people with the skills and confidence to respond in a cardiac emergency.

Using training manikins and AED simulators, attendees are able

to practise each step in a safe and supportive environment. The focus is on simplicity and confidence-building, with instructors guiding participants through real-life scenarios and answering questions along the way.

One volunteer shared:

“It's amazing how quickly people can go from unsure to empowered. These sessions show that anyone can help save a life.”

Thanks to your kind-hearted support, these sessions are being offered at no cost to the community – and they're just the beginning. More sessions are already planned for NSW in the first half of 2026, and there are plans to expand to other states and territories across Australia in the coming months.

Interested in attending a session?

If you'd like to learn more or help bring a session to your area, please contact the Heart of the Nation team at hotn@heartfoundation.org.au

Each one-hour session is led by a trained local volunteer, and offers participants the chance to learn practical, hands-on skills. The sessions explore:

- the difference between a heart attack and cardiac arrest
- how to recognise when someone needs CPR
- how to respond in a cardiac arrest
- hands-on practice with CPR and an AED



Over 32,000 people in Australia have a cardiac arrest every year – 80% of these occur at home



Only about **10% of people** who have a cardiac arrest outside hospital survive



When CPR is performed and an AED is used quickly, **survival rates can increase to 60-70%**



Only 19% of Australians said they would feel confident performing CPR – even fewer feel prepared to use an AED

Passing the rope to the next generation

How Jump Rope for Heart is helping kids build life-long heart-healthy habits when it matters most

Remember the joy of skipping at school? Learning new tricks, laughing with your classmates, and the feeling when you finally mastered Double Dutch? For over 40 years now, Jump Rope for Heart has kept that spirit alive – bringing movement, fun, and heart healthy habits into schools across Australia. And in a time when children are moving less than ever before, that mission has never mattered more.

What started in 1983 as a simple skipping initiative, Jump Rope for Heart has grown into one of Australia's longest-running school health programs. Jump Rope for Heart encourages kids to get active through skipping, to learn about healthy habits, and raise funds to help support life-saving research and programs.

Healthy habits start in childhood

We often assume that kids are naturally active – but research tells a different story.

Professor Jo Salmon, Heart Foundation-funded researcher and professor at of the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition at Deakin University, has found that physical inactivity and prolonged sitting can begin to affect heart health from as early as six years old. Concerningly, most children spend up to 80% of their school day sitting.

“We’re looking at one of the most sedentary generations of children

in history,” Professor Salmon explains. “This could have serious implications for their heart health later in life.”

Three out of four kids aged 5–14 are not getting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

“I’ve got four grandchildren,” shares Professor Salmon. “When they’re my age, they could be at much greater risk of cardiovascular disease than I was because of this sedentary lifestyle.”

Her research shows that active children are more likely to become active adults, and physical activity is an essential lifelong health behaviour that protects against heart disease.

Getting schools moving with Jump Rope for Heart

With children spending so much of their day at school, the environments created there play a powerful role in shaping healthy habits. That’s exactly why programs like Jump Rope for Heart are so important.

By embedding movement into the school day in a fun, social, and achievable way, Jump Rope for Heart helps kids build positive associations with physical activity – helping lay the foundations for heart health now and in the future.

The perfect exercise for young hearts

More than just a playful schoolyard pastime, skipping is a powerful tool for wellbeing. It strengthens the heart muscles, improves circulation, and supports physical development by building balance, coordination, and motor skills.

Skipping is also highly accessible. It requires minimal equipment, little space, and can be adapted for different abilities – making it an ideal way to encourage movement across diverse school communities.

When kids skip together, they’re also learning teamwork, communication, and cooperation – skills that help them thrive both on and off the playground.

Skipping with heart

The impact of programs like Jump Rope for Heart can be seen in every school, every classroom, and every child who takes part – and for some kids, that impact is deeply personal. One of those kids is Axel.



Axel has taken part in Jump Rope for Heart for the last two years, but this year the program meant something more. Just after Axel turned five, his baby brother Tanner sadly passed away from a heart defect at only three weeks old. It's a loss no family should ever experience – and one that inspired Axel to skip with even greater purpose.



Axel, Grade 4
Jump Rope for
Heart Hero

For Axel, skipping isn't just fun. Although he absolutely loves mastering new tricks and pushing himself to try new skills, it's also his way of honouring his little brother and helping other families just like his. His mum says that fundraising makes him feel proud – like he's doing something good, something that matters.

“I like skipping and it's fun to do with friends and learn new tricks. I think more kids should sign up for Jump Rope for Heart because it's lots of fun and you're raising money for a good cause.”

Stories like Axel's are part of a much bigger picture. Thanks to people like you, Jump Rope for Heart has reached thousands of kids across Australia, helping them build healthy habits, get active, and learn the importance of heart health while supporting vital research and programs.

People like you have helped this program for over 40 years now. Thank you for helping create healthier hearts for the next generation.



If you're a parent, grandparent, or carer, now's the time to pass the skipping rope to the next generation. Registrations for term 2 are now open – encourage your school to sign up or scan the QR code to learn more.

YOUR COMMUNITY

Empowering innovation

Eight grants awarded to help local communities get moving



Regular exercise is vital for a healthy heart – but for many people in Australia, getting active isn't always easy. That's why the Heart Foundation created the Active Australia Innovation Challenge: to support communities in bringing to life creative, inclusive programs to get more of us moving.

The Active Australia Innovation Challenge (AAIC) offers grants of up to \$30,000 to support innovative programs that encourage physical activity, especially in communities where people may face barriers to regular movement. It's about grassroots change, making exercise more accessible, enjoyable, and sustainable for everyone.

Late in 2025, eight community-led initiatives received a combined \$200,000 in funding through the AAIC, supporting a diverse range of ideas to help more people in Australia get moving. Projects like:

- **'Riding to Freedom' – Western Australia**
An inclusive, school-championed mountain biking program to support students with disabilities
- **'Koo-No-Wang (Black Swan) Dance Project' – Victoria**
A cultural revitalisation project aimed at using dance to preserve and pass down Aboriginal cultural practices
- **'All In' – Queensland**
A year-long program run by experienced exercise physiologists, to support people with disabilities to improve their health
- **'A welcoming and accessible playground for all' – South Australia**
An indoor, disability-friendly, and sensory playground for children with physical or intellectual disabilities

Programs like these are empowering people to make lasting lifestyle changes – supporting heart health and building stronger, healthier communities.



Want to learn more?

Scan the QR code for more about the AAIC and the projects making a big impact across Australia.

A new hope for rheumatic heart disease

How a new treatment could help protect children from lifelong heart damage

For many people in Australia, rheumatic heart disease (RHD) is a condition of the past. But for some regional and remote communities, it remains a serious and ongoing threat. Now, new research from Dr Ailin Lepletier is exploring how to stop the progression of RHD and protect young hearts from lifelong damage.

RHD: a condition that shouldn't exist in Australia

With antibiotics and improved living conditions, RHD has been mostly eliminated across Australia. But the burden of RHD continues to fall disproportionately on First Nations communities.

RHD begins with a Strep A infection, a common bacteria that can infect the throat or skin. In most cases, Strep A infections are easily treated with antibiotics. But sometimes, the body's immune system overreacts, attacking its own tissues and causing inflammation. If left untreated,

this can progress to RHD – where the heart valves are permanently damaged by inflammation.

More than 80% of people in Australia living with RHD are First Nations peoples, with children in regional and remote communities most at risk.

RHD is closely linked to social and environmental factors – like overcrowded housing, limited access to washing or hygiene facilities, and barriers to culturally safe medical services. These broader socioeconomic challenges contribute to the higher rates of RHD among First Nations peoples.

A decades-old approach

For children who develop acute rheumatic fever, treatment involves a long-term course of antibiotics to prevent further infections and stop inflammation from progressing.

This means receiving monthly intramuscular injections – often for at least five years, and sometimes up to 10 years. With no vaccine available, these treatments are essential to prevent recurring infections, but they're difficult to maintain, especially for families living in regional and remote areas.

This approach to treatment has been largely unchanged for over 70 years. It's not a cure, and for many children, it's a distressing and disruptive routine that can last through most of their childhood.

A new treatment breakthrough

Dr Ailin Lepletier, a Heart Foundation-funded researcher from Griffith University in QLD, is leading an exciting project to develop a better alternative.

Her team is investigating a therapy using subcutaneous injections (just beneath the skin) of a molecule called interleukin-2 (IL-2), which at

How RHD develops:



Strep A infection develops

A common throat or skin infection



The immune system can overreact

The body mistakenly attacks its own tissues



Acute rheumatic fever occurs

Inflammation affects the heart, joints, and brain



Progression to RHD

Repeated or prolonged inflammation causes permanent heart valve damage



low doses may help 'reset' the immune system. This reduces inflammation in the heart before permanent damage occurs.



“Our early preclinical results have already shown promise,” says Dr Lepletier. “My goal is now to develop a treatment plan ready for clinical trials – so we can offer a less painful and more convenient alternative to long-term antibiotic injections.”

Driven by compassion

Dr Lepletier is motivated by a desire to help children and families affected by RHD, especially in communities where access to care is limited. Her work is part of the Heart Foundation’s broader vision to make heart health achievable for everyone by 2050, and to close the gap in health outcomes for First Nations people.

“RHD is a preventable condition that is still damaging too many young hearts. I’m excited to lead research that could finally change this.”

Made possible by you

Research like this is only possible thanks to caring people like you.

“Your support is giving hope to people impacted by this devastating disease and allowing me to keep pushing forward as a researcher, working to turn discoveries into life-saving therapies,” says Dr Lepletier. “I’m deeply grateful for your generous support.”

PAUSE & PUZZLE

Myth or fact

From research to reality, how many heart health myths can you spot?

1. You need to be a trained medical professional to perform CPR.	MYTH FACT
2. Physical activity in childhood can reduce the risk of heart disease later in life.	MYTH FACT
3. Women and men can experience different heart attack warning signs.	MYTH FACT
4. You need to exercise vigorously every day to improve your heart health.	MYTH FACT
5. The Heart Foundation's peer support groups are only for people who are personally diagnosed with heart disease.	MYTH FACT
6. A Heart Health Check only takes 20 minutes.	MYTH FACT

Answers:

- 1. MYTH:** You don't need formal training to perform CPR. Any attempt at resuscitation is better than none. By taking quick action, you could help save a life.
- 2. FACT:** Research suggests that sitting less and moving more can help children and young people to reduce their risk of developing health problems later in life.
- 3. FACT:** Chest pain is the most common heart attack symptom affecting both women and men. However, women often present with non-chest pain symptoms of heart attacks – like jaw, shoulder or back pain, nausea or vomiting, dizziness, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, indigestion or fatigue/tiredness.
- 4. MYTH:** It's recommended that adults aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity at least five days a week. This includes any activity that makes your heart beat faster but doesn't leave you breathless – like a brisk walk, swimming, or skipping.
- 5. MYTH:** Our peer support groups are here to support everyone – this includes people who have been diagnosed with heart disease, as well as those who care for someone with heart disease.
- 6. FACT:** A Heart Health Check is a 20-minute check with your GP to help understand your risk of a heart attack or stroke. Since April 2019, Heart Health Checks have been covered by Medicare and are free at practices that bulk bill this service.



HEART-HEALTHY RECIPE

Fruity hot cross scones

👤 16 serves 🕒 25mins prep 🍳 20mins cook

P.S. This recipe is a keeper. Tear me out to save me for later!

Ingredients

¾ cup mashed Kent (Jap) pumpkin
½ cup fat-reduced milk
1 egg
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons honey
2 cups wholemeal self-raising flour
1 cup self-raising flour
2 teaspoons mixed spice
¾ cup dates, chopped
⅓ cup sultanas
¼ cup currants
100g ricotta and ¼ cup honey, to serve

Cross topping

¼ cup plain flour
2 tablespoons cold water

Glaze

2 teaspoons honey

Method

Step 1: Place pumpkin, milk, egg, oil, and honey in a large jug. Whisk to combine.

Step 2: Sift flours and spice into a large bowl, returning any husks remaining in sieve to the bowl. Stir in dates, sultanas, and currants. Make well in centre. Add pumpkin mixture. Stir with a round-bladed knife to form a dough.

Step 3: Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface. Gently knead until mixture comes together. Using lightly floured hands, pat out dough to a 2½ cm thickness. Cut into rounds with a 5.5 cm round cutter. Repeat step with dough trimmings, until all the dough is used, making 16 rounds altogether. Place rounds, side by side, on a lightly greased baking tray.

Step 4: To make cross topping, place flour in a small bowl. Stir in about 2 tablespoons water to form a thick paste. Spoon into a snap lock sandwich bag. Squeeze mixture towards one corner of bag. Snip tip. Pipe over rounds to form crosses.

Step 5: Bake in a 190°C oven (fan-forced) for 18–20 minutes, or until scones are evenly browned.

Step 6: For glaze, place honey in a small heatproof bowl. Microwave honey on high for 10 seconds, until hot. Brush hot honey over scones.

Step 7: To serve, split warm scones in half, lightly spread with ricotta and drizzle with a small amount of honey.

Step 8: Show us how you went! Share a photo on social media and tag us: [@HeartFoundationAU](https://www.instagram.com/HeartFoundationAU)



Check out our full collection of delicious heart-healthy recipes on our website. They're all designed to be tasty, easily fit into a heart-healthy eating pattern, and offer inspiration for cooking meals at home. Scan here or visit heartfoundation.org.au/recipes. Enjoy!

Thank you

for helping create an Australia where heart health is achievable for everyone