

From the *heart*



AUTUMN EDITION

COVER STORY
AN EPIC
JOURNEY:

Dawn's 20,000km
run & ride for
healthy hearts

HEART HEALTH
QUIZ: Test your
heart health
knowledge

Our hearts together



I'm excited to bring you this issue of From the Heart. It highlights the life-saving difference we can make on heart health across Australia when we work together.

Saving hearts is more important than ever. Without change, we can expect 1.37 million people in Australia to face a cardiovascular event this decade, impacting quality of life for individuals, families and communities. Alongside the personal toll, the financial impact will also be significant – resulting in \$62 billion in healthcare costs and \$79 billion in broader economic losses. But there is so much we can do to change the future.

From incredible journeys to game-changing new technology – we're spotlighting some extraordinary people and ideas that have the potential to transform lives. Together, they can change the future for Australians living with heart disease and their families.

In this edition, you'll meet Dawn, who is going to incredible lengths to help end heart disease. After her family's experience with heart disease, Dawn wanted to make a difference and set off on an epic journey around Australia to raise much needed funds.

Discover how our Catalyst Partnership Grants are supporting innovative ideas. Plus, learn about the 20-minute test that could help you understand your risk of heart disease.

Everything we do is only possible thanks to people like you. You make an incredible difference to the hearts and lives of people in Australia and their families who have been touched by heart disease. We are so grateful for your support.

David Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer
Heart Foundation

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Our heartfelt community

Heart disease affects millions of people living in Australia, touching countless lives in different ways. With such a widespread impact, everyone has a story.

We are grateful to those who have shared their personal experiences with us. Every story is a powerful reminder of why research, prevention, and support matter. Today, we want to take a moment to share some of these stories from our community.

“The benefits of the Heart Foundation's work are immeasurable. The lives you have saved must be many! My family and I are very grateful for indirect benefits we received when I had my heart event. Thank you all very much.”

W. Nielson, NSW

“Thank you for all your research, promoting public awareness, and highlighting the need to get tested for heart disease. I had open heart surgery – 5 grafts – in May 2000. I now enjoy very good health, thanks to diet and exercise.”

J. Fraser, VIC

“My son was born in 1996 with complex congenital heart disease. He is now the father of two healthy children. Without the research undertaken back then, he would not be with us now.”

R. Hopkins, NSW

“As I lost my only daughter nearly six years ago to cardiac arrest, I would like to encourage everyone to do whatever they can to help heart research. Because to lose a loved one without warning, without a chance to say goodbye, is the worst thing that can happen to you.”

M. Moustoukas, QLD



COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

An epic journey of the heart

20,000km in 200 days – Dawn's ambitious adventure to help save hearts across Australia has begun.

Described as loud, resilient and ambitious, Dawn exudes positive energy. And for the past three years, she's had one thing in her sights: running and riding a bicycle around Australia, raising money to help make heart disease history. A 200-day, 20,000km journey she embarked on from Adelaide in February.

Where it all began

When her mother had a heart attack in 2013 while at the theatre, Dawn saved her life by giving CPR. It was a traumatic experience she'll never forget.

“My mother was overweight and a smoker,” Dawn shares on her website. “This combination, along with her family history of cardiovascular disease ended in a very unpleasant evening and months to follow. Mum quit smoking and had a gastric sleeve to help her lose the weight for good.”

While Dawn's mother is doing well today, many others aren't so lucky – Dawn learnt that cardiovascular disease is one of the biggest killers in Australia, with heart attacks killing 19 people in Australia every day. Once Dawn saw first-hand the

impact of heart disease, she wanted to do something. Inspired by other passionate fundraisers and her love of running and cycling, Dawn decided to embark on a cross-country journey of her own. She just needed a name for the duathlon. Thinking about how much people gamble with their heart health every day, Dawn landed on Queen of Hearts Run & Ride.

A duathlon for better heart health

With the help of a dedicated team of health professionals, her husband, and her fur baby Archie, Dawn has been training over 25 hours a week for her incredibly ambitious challenge.

“Every day, I will be running 15km to start, then riding 80km, and then lacing up the shoes again for another 7km,” says Dawn. “This break-up of exercise will give me the greatest chances of staying injury free during the 200 days.”

Dawn's ambitions are high – and not just for her journey. After her mum's heart attack, Dawn came across the Heart Foundation's critical research, support, and prevention programs. That's why she's also raising funds for

the Heart Foundation, and she hopes to break the Heart Foundation's all-time highest fundraiser record.

Dawn's determination is nothing short of inspiring. Her commitment to pushing her limits and raising funds will make an incredible difference to the heart health of people in Australia.

Dawn is currently making her way through South Australia and has already covered over 700km on her journey. From Streaky Bay, SA, she shared:

“The support I have received on the road has been next level. I've had people just walk up to me before or during my run & ride to hand us cash donations. Archie the dog is currently leading the donations quota, with a \$1,000 donation because he was 'cute!'”

If you are looking for your next challenge, scan the QR code to visit our website:





INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY

Women’s heart health – a global priority

Prioritising women’s heart health has never been more critical. And that’s exactly what the Heart Foundation is doing as part of an international partnership.

Despite being one of Australia’s leading causes of death in women, cardiovascular disease in women remains under-researched and undertreated.

Historically, women have been underrepresented in cardiovascular research and clinical trials, meaning their risk factors and symptoms are not as well understood. As a result, women are less likely than men to receive a timely diagnosis, be referred for lifesaving treatments, or be included in studies that shape medical guidelines.

While cardiovascular disease affects both men and women, women also face additional risk factors that evolve throughout their lives. Early or late periods, complications during pregnancy, and early menopause can all increase a woman’s risk of developing heart disease. Yet women are significantly less likely to be treated for heart attacks or chest pain in hospital.

If we’re going to change outcomes for women, we need to change the way heart health research is conducted—making it more inclusive, equitable, and tailored to women’s needs.

The Global Cardiovascular Research Funders Forum (GCRFF) is a collaborative, international partnership of major cardiovascular research funders – including the Heart Foundation. The partnership, founded in 2018, aims to improve global cardiovascular health by accelerating, supporting and promoting international research efforts in heart, stroke and circulatory diseases.

A key aim of the GCRFF is working to improve the representation of women in cardiovascular research. The group is committed to allocating funds to under-researched areas, embedding sex and gender considerations in study design and reporting, and supporting diverse and inclusive participant recruitment.

Understanding where to focus efforts means we can continue to fund research that will have the greatest impact. That’s why the GCRFF has launched a world-first \$10 million research grant to improve women’s heart health. Over five years, this international collaboration will tackle key research gaps and set a new standard in women’s cardiovascular health.

In 2024, the GCRFF published a groundbreaking international study that identifies global research priorities for women’s cardiovascular health.

The study revealed that:

- Women-specific risk factors and prevention strategies are critical research areas
- Life course impacts, such as pregnancy and menopause, are underexplored yet vital considerations
- Diagnosing and treating heart disease needs to be more tailored to women, with sex and gender-specific approaches
- Collaborative research is essential for advancing women’s heart health

This crucial investment, made possible by your support, is a step towards a brighter future for everyone impacted by heart disease – ensuring better heart health outcomes for the next generation of women.

RESEARCH

Celebrating the women in heart research

The Heart Foundation is also funding 109 projects led by women researchers, including 12 focused specifically on women’s heart health, alongside its work with the GCRFF. These researchers are expanding our understanding, improving diagnosis, and developing treatments tailored to women’s needs.

Here’s a look at four researchers and the important projects you’re helping to support:



50.4% of researchers supported by the Heart Foundation are women



We’ve funded 109 research projects led by women



We have invested \$47.65 million into women-led research



Dr Lauren Houston,
University of New South Wales

Revolutionising heart disease screening for women

Dr Houston’s research is exploring whether routine mammograms could also be used to predict a woman’s risk of heart disease. Each year, half of women in Australia aged 50–74 have breast cancer screenings. If successful, this ‘two-for-one’ approach could help detect heart disease earlier and improve prevention – while also helping to close the gap in how heart disease is detected in women.



Professor Maxine Bonham,
Monash University

The role of meal timing in heart health

Whilst menopause increases a woman’s risk of heart disease, there are few lifestyle programs designed to help. Professor Bonham is studying how simple changes – like eating within set hours of the day and doing short bursts of exercise – can improve heart health after menopause. By working directly with women to create personalised, realistic plans, her research aims to find practical ways to prevent heart disease for women.



Dr Natasha de Alwis,
The University of Melbourne

Tackling preeclampsia and its long-term heart effects

Preeclampsia is a serious pregnancy complication that can harm a mother’s health during pregnancy but also increases her risk of heart disease later in life. Dr de Alwis is exploring whether existing medications that reduce inflammation could be used to treat preeclampsia and help protect women’s heart health after pregnancy.



Professor Rebecca Ritchie,
Monash University

Addressing heart failure in women with diabetes

Women with type 1 diabetes are almost twice as likely as men to develop heart failure, but current treatments don’t take these differences into account. Professor Ritchie is studying why women’s hearts may respond differently to common treatments. Using a tiny, beating heart model made from human cells, her research aims to find better, more targeted treatments for women with diabetes-related heart failure.



CATALYST PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Catalyst for change: Funding bold ideas to transform heart health

Ten innovative thinkers will secure game-changing funding through the new Catalyst Partnership Grants to help transform heart health in Australia.

- Performing heart surgery without opening a person's chest.
- Protecting heart attack survivors from a recurrent attack.
- Creating digital twins to help predict disease and personalise treatment.

These are just a few of the bold and ambitious ideas that we received among the more than 220 expressions of interest for our new Catalyst Partnership Grants.

These grants are a new, collaborative way of supporting feasible, scalable game-changing ideas that will help transform heart health in Australia and beyond.

Over the past 60 years, your support has been invested into more than \$850 million in research to improve cardiovascular health, with great results. The Catalyst Partnership Grants complement these research efforts, helping some of the brightest minds fast-track bold ideas that align with our mission.

After a rigorous selection process 20 finalists, 'Twenty of the Best' were selected to present at the Catalyst Showcase event. Over two exciting days in March, the applicants pitched their ideas to potential investors and donors from various sectors. With the help of an expert panel of advisors, ten applicants will each be awarded \$100,000 grants to help kick-start their projects. The Heart Foundation will then work alongside them to secure additional funding and bring their innovative ideas to life.

Stay tuned for further updates as we will soon be able to reveal more about the successful projects.



“Imagine a shark tank approach to cardiovascular health! We are excited to have uncovered big, bold ideas that have the potential to change the cardiovascular landscape in Australia and beyond.”

David Lloyd, CEO Heart Foundation



Take our heart-smart quiz!

Do you know how to keep your heart healthy? Take this quick quiz to find out.

1. How many minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity should you do daily to look after your heart?
 - A. 90
 - B. 15
 - C. 30
 - D. 120
2. True or false: A woman's risk of heart disease increases after menopause.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. Which of these is a common symptom of a heart attack?
 - A. Feeling anxious
 - B. Indigestion
 - C. Chest pain
 - D. Shortness of breath
 - E. Any of the above.
4. True or false: Looking after your heart means you shouldn't eat fat.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. What is the best way to learn your risks of having a heart attack or stroke?
 - A. Look into your family history
 - B. Get a 20-minute Heart Health Check
 - C. Check your blood pressure
 - D. Visit the Heart Foundation website at: heartfoundation.org.au
 - E. All of the above

Answers:

1. You should aim for 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity 5 or more days per week to maintain a healthy heart.
2. True. A woman's risk of heart disease increases after menopause, due partly to changes in cholesterol, blood pressure and metabolism.
3. E. They can all be warning signs of a heart attack. If you experience these symptoms, call Triple Zero. Because every minute counts.
4. False. A balanced diet includes unsaturated fats from things like nuts, seeds and olive oil, and omega-3s from foods including fish, and nuts and seeds.
5. E. It is important to understand your personal risk factors and obtain regular health advice from your GP.

HEART HEALTH CHECK

20 minutes could save your life

Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in Australia. The good news is many heart attacks and strokes can be prevented. And a quick visit to your GP is a key first step.



Do you know how likely you are to have a heart attack or stroke in the next five years?

More than 1.4 million people in Australia are at high risk – and many are unaware.

It's because you often can't feel some of the risk factors, like high blood pressure or cholesterol. That's something Jarrod knows all too well.

“I thought I was fine – until I had two heart attacks.”

At just 43, Jarrod suffered two heart attacks without realising what was happening. He dismissed his symptoms – shivering, sweating, a racing heart – as just part of life. It wasn't until he finally saw

a doctor that he learned 85% of his heart arteries were blocked. Without urgent triple bypass surgery, he wouldn't have survived.

Like many people in Australia, Jarrod didn't know his heart disease risk. But he wishes he had gotten checked earlier.

“A lot of us blokes ignore these things. If I had known my risk, I would have done something about it sooner.”

A simple, 20-minute Medicare-subsidised Heart Health Check with your GP will help you understand your risk of a heart attack or stroke in the next five years.



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What happens at a Heart Health Check?



Your GP or nurse will ask you about your **medical and family history** of heart disease, as well as your lifestyle, including your diet, physical activity, if you smoke or drink alcohol, and whether you have a healthy weight.



They will also **check your blood pressure**, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. Your GP will use this information to estimate your risk of heart attack or stroke in the next five years.



More importantly, they will discuss the **steps you can take** to lower your risk.

How do I know if I need a Heart Health Check?



If you are **aged 45 and over** and do not already have heart disease, we recommend you see your GP for a Heart Health Check.



Some people **may be eligible earlier**, including First Nations peoples from 30 years, and from 35 years for people living with diabetes.

Book a Heart Health Check with your GP today.



RECIPE

Easter brunch tarts

👤 4 serves 🕒 15mins 🍳 15mins

Ingredients

8 slices wholemeal bread, crusts removed
1 tablespoon olive oil
75g baby spinach leaves
150g drained roasted capsicum, chopped
2 green shallots, thinly sliced
8 eggs
1/3 cup grated tasty cheese
3 vine-ripened tomatoes, cut into wedges
1 medium avocado, peeled and chopped
2 tablespoons tomato chutney, to serve

Method

Step 1: Using a rolling pin, firmly roll each bread slice until thin. Lightly brush both sides of bread with oil. Press slices into 8 round, non-stick metal pie tins (1-cup capacity, 11 cm in diameter, 4 cm deep). Place tins on a large baking tray.

Step 2: Reserve half the spinach leaves to serve. Coarsely shred remaining spinach leaves. Divide shredded spinach, capsicum and shallots evenly among bread cases. Make a slight hollow in centre. Carefully crack an egg into each one. Sprinkle with cheese. Season with freshly ground pepper.

Step 3: Bake in 200°C oven (fan-forced) for about 15 minutes, or until egg is set and edges are lightly browned. Stand in tins for 2 minutes. Gently toss reserved spinach leaves with tomato and avocado.

Step 4: To serve, transfer tarts to plates. Top with chutney. Serve with spinach, tomato and avocado mix.



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 giving hope to all those impacted
by heart disease in Australia