



## Fact sheet

### The benefits of physical activity and walking

- Numerous studies in recent decades have shown that people who are moderately physically active have between a one-and-a-half and two-fold reduced risk of cardiovascular events and cardiovascular death<sup>11</sup>:
  - Physical activity also reduces the risk of non-insulin dependent diabetes, and favourably influences body weight, blood pressure and lipid profiles<sup>12</sup>.
  - Brisk walking for three or more hours per week could reduce the risk of coronary events in women by 30 to 40%<sup>13</sup>.
  - Regular walking is associated with a lower overall mortality rate in older physically capable men<sup>14</sup>.
  - For every 1% of adults who become sufficiently active, there would be 122 fewer premature deaths and 1,764 years of life gained<sup>15</sup>.
- The Heart Foundation recommends that adults participate in moderate physical activity for at least thirty minutes a day, on most, preferably all days of the week.
- Nine out of 10 Australian adults have at least one modifiable risk factor for heart, stroke and vascular diseases and one in four have three or more risk factors<sup>1</sup>. These factors include being overweight or obese, not being sufficiently active, having high blood cholesterol or pressure, smoking, drinking at harmful levels or having diabetes. In particular:
  - 60% are overweight – 7.42 million adults
  - 54% are not sufficiently active to enjoy health benefits – 7.27 million adults
  - 51% have high blood cholesterol – 6.4 million adults
  - 30% have high blood pressure – 3.69 million adults
  - 20% smoke daily – 3.06 million adults
  - 10% drink at levels considered harmful to their health – 1.54 million adults
  - 8% have diabetes – 945,600 adults

**For more heart health information or to make a donation to the Heart Foundation, call Heartline 1300 36 27 87 or visit [www.heartfoundation.com.au](http://www.heartfoundation.com.au)**

<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2004. Heart, stroke and vascular diseases – Australian facts 2004. AIHW Cat. No. CVD 27. Canberra: AIHW and National Heart Foundation of Australia (Cardiovascular Disease Series No. 22).

<sup>2</sup> Access Economics 2005. The Shifting Burden of Cardiovascular Disease in Australia. Access Economics and the National Heart Foundation of Australia.

<sup>11</sup> Baumann A, Bellew B, Vita P, Brown W, Owen N. Getting Australia Active: towards better practice for the promotion of physical activity. National Public Health Partnership. Melbourne, Australia, March 2002.

<sup>12</sup> National Heart Foundation of Australia. Physical Activity Policy. NHFA 2001

<sup>13</sup> Manson JE, Hu FB, et al. A prospective study of walking as compared with vigorous exercise in the prevention of coronary heart disease in women. N. Engl J Med 1999; 341: 650-8.

<sup>14</sup> Hakim AA, Petrovitch H, et al. Effect of walking on mortality among non-smoking retired men. NEJM 1998; 338 (2):94-99

<sup>15</sup> Chronic Illness: Australia's Health Challenge –The Economic Case for Physical Activity and Nutrition in the Prevention of Chronic Disease – Full Report, 2004, Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance.