

7 May 24

Did your heart skip a beat? It's not love... get a Heart Check!

Heart Week 6-12 May

A visit to your rural GP can assess your risk of a heart attack or stroke in the next five years, and give you strategies to manage it.

Dr RT Lewandowski, President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia, said that checking heart health before suffering symptoms of heart disease saves many lives.



"It is Heart Week, so a great time to remind everyone of the importance of Heart Checks," Dr Lewandowski said.

"People living in regional and rural areas have an increased risk of heart disease and, adding to that, the further a person lives from a major city, the higher their chance of being hospitalised or dying from cardiovascular disease (CDV). CDV is actually the leading cause of death in rural and remote areas.

"While some risk factors, like your age, ethnic background and family history, can't be controlled, others, such as smoking, physical inactivity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes and being overweight, can.

"Rural patients visit their GP, on average, 1-2 fewer times per year than other Australians, and they are also less able to access to facilities and supports for a heart-healthy lifestyle, such as quality and affordable fresh food, sporting clubs, exercise facilities, and environments conducive to walking and cycling.

"While these things do make it harder, it is not impossible, and lifestyle health benefits can be enormous and are well worth additional effort," Dr Lewandowski said.

"So this Heart Week, we're asking all our rural patients over the age of 45 to speak to their GP about a Heart Health Check."

Early symptoms of heart disease can be subtle and easy to overlook. They can include:

- shortness of breath
- weakness or fatigue
- a general feeling of unease or discomfort
- sweating
- nausea or vomiting
- lightheadedness or dizziness



- mild pain in the throat or chest
- pain in the back or arms, like a sprained or pulled muscle.

“If you are suffering any of these symptoms you should visit your local rural doctor asap. But the best time to treat heart disease is before symptoms start,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“Find out more about [Heart Health Checks here](#), and use the [Heart Age Calculator](#) to assess your heart disease risk.”

A high resolution photo of Dr RT Lewandowski is [available here](#).

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