

# A BAD RELATIONSHIP: DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE



Hundreds of thousands of Australians are living with a bad relationship – the relationship between their diabetes and their heart.

## Many people don't even know

The connection between type 2 diabetes and heart disease is closer than many Australians think. People living with type 2 diabetes are two to four times more likely to develop heart disease, but only 12 per cent think they are personally at risk.<sup>1</sup>

For people with type 2 diabetes, the first step to a better relationship with your heart is knowing your risk. Then you can take steps to improve your heart health.

## The heart of the matter

Between one and three per cent of people with type 2 diabetes experience a heart attack every year.<sup>2</sup> That means that in any given year between 11,000 and 33,000 Australians will suffer a diabetes-related heart attack.

Heart disease contributes to just under two-thirds of deaths in people with type 2 diabetes.<sup>3</sup> Alarmingly two-thirds of people with type 2 diabetes do not know that heart disease is the number one cause of death for people with type 2 diabetes.



Credit: Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute

## Why is this relationship so complicated?

Diabetes, like other causes of heart disease, causes plaque to build up on the walls of the arteries. This can clog up the arteries, making it easier for cholesterol to gather and making blood flow more difficult. This blockage can lead to heart attacks, strokes and even sudden death.

Diabetes also damages the walls of blood vessels, making them more prone to injury from blood pressure, swelling in the arteries and plaque build-up.

## What do I need to do?

Now is the time for you to take diabetes to heart. Have a serious conversation with your GP about what you can do to reduce your risk.

It takes more than controlling blood glucose levels to reduce your risk.

If you have diabetes, speak to your GP about the relationship between diabetes and heart disease. If you have loved ones with type 2 diabetes, encourage them to take action and speak with their GP. The sooner you do, the sooner you and a GP can take action.

- <sup>1</sup> Haffner, S., Lehto, S., Rönnemaa, T., Pyörälä, K. and Laakso, M. (1998). Mortality from Coronary Heart Disease in Subjects with Type 2 Diabetes and in Nondiabetic Subjects with and without Prior Myocardial Infarction. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 339(4), pp.229-234.
- <sup>2</sup> Shaw, P., Thomas, P. and Magliano, A. (2018). *The Dark Heart of Type 2 Diabetes*. [online] Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute. Available at: <https://www.baker.edu.au/-/media/documents/impact/Baker-Institute-The-dark-heart-of-type-2-diabetes.ashx?la=en> [Accessed 8 Jun. 2018].
- <sup>3</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. Deaths among people with diabetes in Australia, 2009–2014. Cat. no. CVD 79. Canberra: AIHW.

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