

THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP

MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING

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WORLD HEART DAY

Today is World Heart Day.

In Australia, heart disease is the biggest killer for both men and women.

This year's World Heart Day theme is 'A workplace that encourages healthy habits can reduce heart disease and stroke'.

Today the challenge is for employers to consider promoting healthier working environments and to consider developing workplace activities that specifically target risk reduction for heart disease and other chronic diseases.

The Rudd Government encourages Australian workplaces to be proactive about creating healthy, active workplaces. Having fresh fruit at work and supporting employees to participate in exercise can hold huge benefits for productivity whilst fighting the growing burden of chronic disease.

The risk factors for heart disease are well established. They include smoking, high blood cholesterol, physical inactivity, poor diet, diabetes, high blood pressure, being overweight, being male and having a family history of early death from coronary heart disease.

Most heart disease is preventable, and risks can be reduced by lifestyle changes.

The Rudd Government is tackling heart disease on several fronts, including funding for research and preventative health programs, providing drugs under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, encouraging lifestyle modification, and supporting Indigenous-specific programs.

These include:

- Investing over \$872 million in preventative health through a historic COAG agreement which includes measures such as the establishment of a Preventative Health Agency.

- An investment of \$102 million by the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission in 2008 on 672 active research grants into heart disease.
- \$11.2 million for the establishment of a national unit to coordinate efforts to tackle rheumatic heart fever among Indigenous children.
- Supporting people with heart disease through the PBS - with \$2 billion spent on heart disease specific medicines between 2007-08.

The Rudd Government knows prevention is better than a cure, and is currently considering the recommendations of the National Preventative Health Strategy.

The strategy includes proposals for creating healthier workplaces, such as those promoted by World Heart Day. Feedback from the community is invited at www.yourhealth.gov.au

For more information on World Heart Day go to www.world-heart-federation.org website.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.