



# Risk factors & chronic disease

Extracted from *Risk factors contributing to chronic disease* report  
Released March 2012

## Prevalence of risk factors is high...

Overall, most people have at least one risk factor for chronic disease. As a person's number of risk factors increases, so does their likelihood of having one or more chronic diseases.

More men (17%) than women (11%) have five or more risk factors.

Certain risk factors commonly occur together:

- Obese people are more likely to have high blood pressure
- People who consume alcohol at risky levels are more likely to report as daily smokers
- People who smoke daily are more likely to be physically inactive.

## Risk factors

### Diet



- People with low intakes of fruit and vegetables have higher risks of certain chronic disease
  - Just over 90% of people fail to eat the recommended amounts of vegetables each day
  - About 50% of people do not consume the recommended amount of fruit each day.

### Physical activity



- Almost 60% of Australians do not undertake sufficient physical activity to benefit their health (about 150 mins per week over 5 sessions)
- More than 80% of Australians spend more than 3 hours each day sitting during their leisure time.

### Daily smoking



- Smoking is the most preventable cause of ill health and death in Australia. Results from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey show that 15.1% of people aged 14 and over smoke daily
- A higher proportion of males (20%) than females (16%) smoke daily
- Most daily smokers take it up during the ages of 12–18 (the high school years)
- The Australian Government's National Tobacco Campaign aims to lower the prevalence of daily smoking to 10% or less by 2020
  - Initiatives include increasing the cost of cigarettes, changes to packaging, and social marketing campaigns.

### Alcohol



- Most Australians drink alcohol, and they do so at levels that cause few adverse effects
- However, regular consumption of alcohol at high levels can contribute to the development of chronic conditions, such as liver disease, some cancers, oral health problems and cardiovascular disease.

### Other behavioural risk factors

- These include use of illicit drugs, some sexual practices, and lack of immunisation/vaccination.

### Psychological risk factors

- These may include stress, trauma and torture.

### Safety risk factors

- Includes general risk-taking, violence and unsafe work practices.

