

## Smoking and Risk of Cardiovascular Disease



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The most in-depth study in the world on smoking risks to cardiovascular health reveals 17 Australian smokers die each day from heart attacks, strokes and other cardiovascular conditions.

The Australian National University (ANU) conducted a study, in partnership with the Heart Foundation and the Sax Institute, with 190,000 Australian smokers and non-smokers over 7 years. The '45 and Up' study considered 36 cardiovascular diseases and found that smoking causes harm to every part of the cardiovascular system.

Lead researcher, Prof. Emily Banks of ANU National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, states that 6400 Australian cardiovascular deaths are caused by smoking each year. Smoking doubles the risk of heart attacks, strokes and heart failures, while also making people five times more likely to develop peripheral cardiovascular diseases such as gangrene.

Prof. Banks also explains that these results were mirrored in people who smoked an average of 5 cigarettes a day; emphasising that even light or 'social smoking' still doubles the risk of cardiovascular-related deaths.

With 2.7 million smokers in Australia, John Kelly, Heart Foundation CEO, states the battle still is not over. Kelly hopes that these results will urge the government to maintain tobacco control and looks forward to seeing these results mirrored in the Prevention Strategy recently announced by the Minister for Health.

In response to the results of the study, Director of Quit Victoria, Dr. Sarah White, emphasises the health benefits of quitting at any age and urges current smokers to call the Quitline, talk to their GP or discuss with a health professional. Prioritising quitting by the age of 45 avoids 90% of cardiovascular risks of smoking.

Dr. Martin McNamara, Deputy CEO of the Sax Institute and Chief Investigator on the 45 and Up study, says by performing the largest long-term health study in Australia and one of the biggest in the world highlights the implications of these findings for healthcare services.

Source: [BMC Medicine](#)

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