# Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) & Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD)

Government of Western Australia **WA Country Health Service** 

in Western Australia 2024

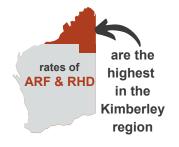
## Acute Rheumatic Fever

An inflammatory illness which may develop after an untreated group A streptococcal (Strep A) infection, which can affect the joints, skin, brain and heart

## **Rheumatic Heart Disease**

Damage to the heart valves that may occur following one or more episodes of ARF

**Over 1700** people are living with ARF and/or RHD in WA

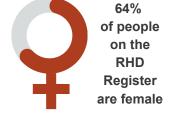




## New cases of ARF in 2024

Diagnosis requires a specific combination of signs and symptoms, plus evidence of a recent Strep A infection

**ARF & RHD** are notifiable diseases in WA





# New cases of RHD in 2024

Echocardiogram is used to diagnose RHD

95% of ARF in last 5 years occurred in Aboriginal people



ARF & RHD can be prevented and managed

#### **Primordial Prevention**



The healthy living practices of reducing household overcrowding and washing of hands and bodies reduces exposure to Strep A infections

### **Primary Prevention**



Ensuring early treatment with antibiotics of Strep A infections such as sore throat and skin sores. to stop progression to ARF

#### **Secondary Prevention**



Regular antibiotic medication (most commonly penicillin injections), required for many years depending on disease severity, to prevent recurrences of ARF

## **Tertiary Management**



Medical management and heart surgery

ARF is most common in children aged 5-14 years



30%

of people in 2024 had severe disease at first RHD diagnosis



Over 900 people in WA on penicillin injections in 2024

14%

received all doses

30%

received > 80% doses

**Heart Valve Surgeries** 



people had surgery in 2024 for RHD

Half of these were under 35 years of age



Author: WA RHD Register and Control Program, WA Country Health Service. Data source: WA RHD Register. Data extract: April 2025. Delays in data submission and data cleansing activities may alter data in future reporting. Reference: RHDAustralia. The 2020 Australian guideline for prevention, diagnosis and management of acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease (3rd edition) 2020. We acknowledge that these numbers represent people living with ARF & RHD, and that this disease impacts on individuals, families and communities. This resource is developed to provide general information only. Please contact the WA RHD Program for further information. E: RHD.Register2@health.wa.gov.au T: 1300 622 745