

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



Government of Western Australia  
WA Country Health Service

in Western Australia 2024

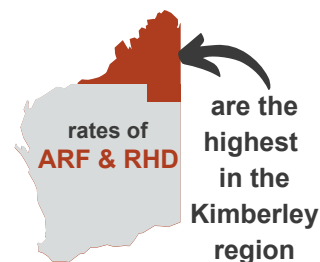
## Acute Rheumatic Fever

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



86

### New cases of ARF in 2024

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

93

### New cases of RHD in 2024

Echocardiogram is used to diagnose RHD

ARF & RHD are notifiable diseases in WA



64% of people on the RHD Register are female

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



ARF is most common in children aged 5-14 years



30% of people in 2024 had severe disease at first RHD diagnosis

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



Over 900 people in WA on penicillin injections in 2024

14%

received all doses

30%

received  $\geq$  80% doses

Heart Valve Surgeries



34 people had surgery in 2024 for RHD

Half of these were under 35 years of age