

## What do I do if I or a family member has any of these symptoms?



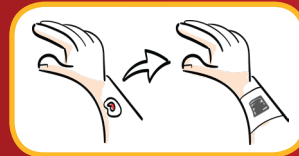
- If your child/family member has a sore throat, painful joints or fever - go to the clinic for a check up as soon as possible.
- Health staff may send your child/family member to the hospital for tests. This is the only way to know for sure if it is acute rheumatic fever.
- The tests may include a throat swab, blood tests and an ultrasound of the heart, called an echocardiogram.



## How can I stop myself or my family from getting sick with acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease?



- Wash hands with soap and water.



- Keep all sores clean and covered.

- Get all sore throats and skin sores checked by a health professional as soon as possible.
- Keep yourself clean, wash daily with soap.
- Good dental hygiene - brush teeth every morning and evening.
- Go to the doctor and dentist regularly.
- Stay healthy - eat good food, be active, get regular checkups and seek help if you have concerns.

# What is acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease?

Acute rheumatic fever (ARF) and rheumatic heart disease (RHD) affects many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Australia has some of the highest rates of ARF and RHD in the world.

**94%** of reported ARF is among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



This leaflet provides information for you, your family and community. It explains how ARF affects your body and how it can be prevented.

For more information, please visit your local health worker, doctor or nurse.

## What is acute rheumatic fever?

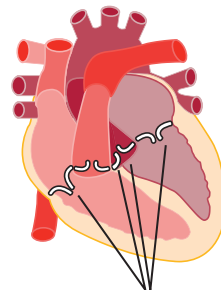


- Acute rheumatic fever is a sickness caused by a germ called streptococcus, also known as strep A.
- The strep germ is a common cause of sore throats and skin sores.
- In some children and adults, 'strep throat' can cause sickness in other parts of the body; joints, skin, heart and brain.

***This is known as acute rheumatic fever or ARF.***

## How does acute rheumatic fever affect the heart?

- Acute rheumatic fever can cause damage to the valves in the heart.
- The valves are like doors in the heart, opening and closing, to make the blood flow in the right direction.
- Damage to the valves can make the heart weak.
- Each time a person has acute rheumatic fever, it can cause more damage to the heart valves.
- People who get rheumatic heart disease can end up very sick.



Heart Valves

***Remaining damage to the heart after an episode of ARF is known as rheumatic heart disease or RHD.***

## Who gets acute rheumatic fever?

- ARF is most commonly seen in school aged children aged 5-14 years, however some adults can also get it.



## How will I know if my child or family member has acute rheumatic fever?

If your child has any of the following symptoms it could be acute rheumatic fever:

- Sore or swollen joints (knees, ankles, elbows, wrists);
- Fever; and/or
- Jerky movements and difficulty walking.

