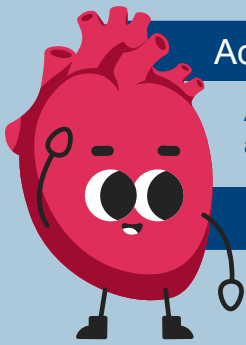


# Acute Rheumatic Fever & Rheumatic Heart Disease



Government of Western Australia  
WA Country Health Service

in Western Australia 2023



## Acute rheumatic fever (ARF)

An autoimmune inflammatory illness which may develop after a group A streptococcal (Strep A) infection

## Rheumatic heart disease (RHD)

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

97

New cases of ARF a year 2019-2023 average

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

75

New cases of RHD a year 2019-2023 average

Echocardiogram is used to diagnose RHD. 25% of people have severe RHD at first diagnosis.

**ARF & RHD are notifiable in WA**

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



rates of  
**ARF**  
& **RHD**

are the highest in the Kimberley region

**96%** of ARF in last 5 years occurred in Aboriginal people



**ARF is most common in children aged 5-14 years**

The burden of disease can last a lifetime, starting in childhood

**ARF & RHD can be prevented and treated**

More than **100** operations for RHD during 2019-2023



Over 900 people on penicillin injections to prevent ARF recurrence

**23%** of people received **≥80%** of penicillin injections



**67%**

of people with RHD are female

childbearing years can be impacted

Exposure to Strep A

Strep throat or skin sores

Acute rheumatic fever

## Primordial Prevention

## Primary Prevention

## Secondary Prevention

Improve environmental health, reduce household crowding and ensure access to washing facilities

Prompt treatment of Strep A throat and skin infections will help prevent ARF

Regular administration of prescribed antibiotics (penicillin injections every 21-28 days) prevents Strep A infections and ARF recurrence

