



**UNDER EMBARGO**—until 1.00am, Thursday, 13 June, 2019

## Healthier population eases Australia's disease burden

The overall health of the Australian population improved substantially between 2003 and 2015 and further gains could be achieved by reducing lifestyle-related risk factors, according to a new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

*The Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2015*, measures the number of years living with an illness or injury (the non-fatal burden) or lost through dying prematurely (the fatal burden).

'In 2015, Australians collectively lost 4.8 million years of healthy life due to living with or dying prematurely from disease and injury,' said AIHW spokesperson Mr Richard Juckes.

The disease groups causing the most burden in 2015 were cancer, cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal conditions, mental and substance use disorders and injuries.

'After accounting for the increase in size and ageing of the population, there was an 11% decrease in the rate of burden between 2003 and 2015.'

Most of the improvement in the total burden resulted from reductions in premature deaths from illnesses and injuries such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and infant and congenital conditions.

'Thirty eight per cent of the total burden of disease experienced by Australians in 2015 could have been prevented by reducing exposure to the risk factors included in this study,' Mr Juckes said.

'The 5 risk factors that caused the most total burden in 2015 were tobacco use (9.3%), overweight & obesity (8.4%), dietary risks (7.3%), high blood pressure (5.8%) and high blood plasma glucose—including diabetes (4.7%).'

For the first time, living with illness or injury caused more total disease burden than premature death. In 2015, the non-fatal share was 50.4% and the fatal share was 49.6% of the burden of disease.

Also released today is an overview of health spending that provides an understanding of the impact of diseases in terms of spending through the health system. The data in *Disease expenditure in Australia* relates to the 2015–16 financial year only and suggests the highest expenditure groups were musculoskeletal conditions (10.7%), cardiovascular diseases (8.9%) injuries (7.6%) and mental and substance use disorders (7.6%).

'Together the burden of disease and spending estimates can be used to understand the impact of diseases on the Australian community. However they can't necessarily be compared with each other, as there are many reasons why they wouldn't be expected to align,' Mr Juckes said.

'For example, spending on reproductive and maternal health is relatively high but it is not associated with substantial disease burden because the result is healthy mothers and babies more often than not.

'Similarly, vaccine-preventable diseases cause very little burden in Australia due to national investment in immunisation programs.'

**Canberra, 13 June 2019**

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**For embargoed media copies of the report:** [media@aihw.gov.au](mailto:media@aihw.gov.au)





In 2015, Australians lost **4.8 million years of healthy life (DALY)** due to:

Living with illness (non-fatal)  
**50.4%** of total burden








Dying prematurely (fatal)  
**49.6%** of total burden



## Good gains in the health of the population between 2003 and 2015



## Proportion (%) of burden attributable to leading 5 risk factors for selected disease groups, 2015

					
Disease group	Tobacco use	Overweight & obesity	Dietary risks <sup>(a)</sup>	High blood pressure	High blood plasma glucose
Cancer	22.1	7.8	4.2	..	2.9
Cardiovascular	11.5	19.3	40.2	38.0	4.9
Respiratory	41.0	8.0	0.3	..	..
Endocrine	3.7	44.6	34.2	..	98.0
Kidney/urinary	..	35.6	7.7	34.1	53.7