

## Life expectancy for Victorians

Life expectancy in Victoria is increasing. Fewer people are dying from heart disease, injuries and infectious diseases. Fewer men are dying from smoking-related illnesses. Life expectancy at birth increased significantly, by two to four years, for both males and females, regardless of their socioeconomic status, between 1996 and 2007.

At the national level, for the period between 2005 and 2007, the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous life expectancy was 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females. Life expectancy at birth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males is estimated to be 67.2 years, and 72.9 years for females.

### Life expectancy of men and women

There are differences in the health and life expectancy of Victorian men and women. Based on data for 2007:

- Women live four years longer than men. However, the gap is narrowing.
- The life expectancy at birth for women was 84.4 years. For men, it was 80.3 years.

### Causes of reduced life expectancy

Causes of reduced life expectancy include:

- **Cardiovascular disease** – ischaemic heart disease (blocked arteries in your heart) and stroke are the most common causes of cardiovascular death.
- **Cancer** – the lungs, bowel, prostate and breast are the most common sites of fatal cancers.
- **Smoking-related illnesses** – include lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (emphysema and chronic bronchitis).
- **Injuries** – suicide, road traffic accidents and falls are the most common causes of death from injury.
- **Diabetes.**

Cardiovascular disease, cancer and injuries together cause over 70 per cent of all premature deaths.

### Improving your life expectancy

To increase your life expectancy you should:

- Avoid smoking.
- Be physically active.
- Reduce your weight if you are overweight.
- Maintain a healthy blood pressure and cholesterol level.
- Avoid alcohol above the recommended safe drinking levels.

Tackling these risk factors will prevent many chronic diseases from developing, which is much better than treating them after they occur.

### Country and city

Living in the country is associated with a decreased life expectancy. This is usually due to cardiovascular disease and injuries caused by:

- Traffic and machinery accidents
- Suicide
- Drowning.

The difference in life expectancy at birth in 2007 between country and metropolitan Victoria was 1.9 years less in males (2.0 years in 2006) and 0.8 years less in females (0.7 years in 2006).

## Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Department of Human Services Tel. 1300 650 172 or (03) 9096 0000

## Things to remember

- Life expectancy for men and women is increasing.
- Aboriginal people are more likely to become ill and die early.
- Reducing risk factors decreases your risk of dying early.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Department of Health - Prevention and Population Health

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