

Early death in Victoria - causes

The Victorian Burden of Disease Study identified who is at greatest risk of early death among Victorians. Cancers, cardiovascular disease and injuries are responsible for two-thirds of early deaths in Victoria. Cancers are a more important cause of premature death than cardiovascular disease for people under the age of 75 years.

Causes in detail

It has been estimated that in the year 2001 in Victoria:

- High blood pressure caused over 10,000 deaths, mainly due to the occurrence of ischaemic heart disease and stroke.
- Tobacco smoking caused almost 4,000 deaths, mainly due to the occurrence of lung and other cancers and chronic airway disease.
- Obesity and physical inactivity together caused over 5,000 deaths, mainly due to the occurrence of diabetes, ischaemic heart disease and stroke.

Men versus women

Ischaemic heart disease (blocked arteries in the heart) is the leading cause of death for both men and women. Other major causes of early death include:

- **Men** – lung cancer, suicide, stroke and bowel cancer
- **Women** – stroke, breast cancer, lung cancer and bowel cancer.

Cancer is the leading cause of early death for both men and women.

Disturbing new trends

There is a disturbing trend towards:

- A rise in tobacco-related illnesses in young women
- Diabetes being among the top 10 causes of premature death in both men and women
- On the positive side, there is a decrease in the number of people dying from cardiovascular heart disease and injuries each year.

Geographical differences

Differences between country and urban Victoria include:

- Country Victorians can expect to live (on average) one to two years less than urban Victorians.
- A higher proportion of total deaths in country areas are due to cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- Years of life are lost at much higher rates (premature death rates are higher) from accidents and injuries in the country.

Country people may be at greater risk of earlier death for many reasons. These include socioeconomic factors and the harsh effects of drought, combined with the limited nature of local services and the longer time taken to get to life-saving treatment, such as resuscitation and surgery.

Where to get help

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

Things to remember

- Cancers, cardiovascular disease and injuries are responsible for two-thirds of early deaths in Victoria.
- People living in the country may be at greater risk of earlier death than city people.

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

Department of Health - Prevention and Population Health

Content on this website is provided for education and information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. Content has been prepared for Victorian residents and wider Australian audiences, and was accurate at the time of publication. Readers should note that, over time, currency and completeness of the information may change. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2012 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.