

## **Cardiovascular Disease Encompasses a broad Spectrum of the following:**

**Cardiovascular disease (CVD)** is a major cause of disease and death in Australia. The main underlying cause of CVD is atherosclerosis, where abnormal deposits of fat, cholesterol and other substances build up in the inner lining of the arteries to form plaque. Atherosclerosis is most serious when it leads to reduced or blocked blood supply to the heart (causing angina or heart attack) or to the brain (causing stroke). Atherosclerosis is slow and complex, often starting in childhood and progressing with age.

**CVD** is preventable in many cases, as several its risk factors are modifiable, such as **overweight and obesity, tobacco smoking, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, insufficient physical activity, poor nutrition and diabetes.**

**Coronary heart disease** is the most common form of CVD. There are 2 major clinical forms—**Heart attack and Angina. Heart attack** is a life-threatening event that occurs when a blood vessel supplying the heart itself is suddenly blocked, causing damage to the heart muscle and its functions. **Angina** is a chronic condition in which short episodes of chest pain can occur periodically when the heart has a temporary deficiency in its blood supply.

**Stroke** occurs when an artery supplying blood to the brain either suddenly becomes blocked or begins to bleed. Stroke often causes paralysis of parts of the body normally controlled by the area affected by the stroke, or speech problems and other symptoms, and is often fatal.

Other common types of CVD are:

**Heart failure** occurs when the heart functions less effectively in its role of pumping blood around the body. Although it can occur suddenly, it usually develops over many years, as the heart gradually becomes weaker and works less effectively.

**Cardiomyopathy** is a condition where there is direct or widespread damage to the heart muscle, weakening it. This can be due to various causes, such as viral infections and severe alcohol abuse. It can lead to an enlarged, thickened and dilated heart as well as heart failure.

**Peripheral vascular disease** refers to diseases of the arteries outside the heart and brain. It occurs when fatty deposits build up in the inner walls of these arteries and affect blood circulation to the arteries that supply blood to the body's peripheries, such as the legs and feet.

**Hypertensive disease** occurs when high blood pressure is severe or prolonged enough to cause damage to the heart or other organs. It can lead to coronary heart disease, heart failure and cardiomyopathy, stroke and chronic kidney disease.

**Acute rheumatic fever (ARF)** is a delayed complication of an untreated throat infection from *Group A Streptococcus bacteria*. Inflammation caused by ARF can cause permanent damage to the heart muscle or heart valves and reduce the ability of the heart to pump blood effectively around the body; this is known as rheumatic heart disease.

**Congenital heart disease** is any disorder of the heart or major blood vessels that is present at birth. It is one of the leading causes of death and hospitalisation in the first year of life. Children with serious congenital heart disease are generally treated with surgery.