

Rheumatic heart disease (RHD)

What is it?

Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) happens when your heart is damaged by acute rheumatic fever (ARF). It affects your heart valves. This means your heart cannot pump blood around the body as well as it should. Symptoms of RHD include:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Swelling

It can be treated with injections every four weeks. Your GP will tell you more about this.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will talk to you about your symptoms and health history. They will do tests to check for recent infections and better understand your heart health. Your GP may send you to get an X-ray or to a specialist called a cardiologist. They will talk to you about how to manage your RHD and prevent getting sick in the future.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will see you every three months for a check-up. They will also arrange for you to see a heart specialist each year for a more in-depth review.

What can I do?

If you have RHD, follow the advice of your healthcare team. If you get sick with a skin or throat infection again, you should visit your GP. You should also practise good hygiene. Things like washing your hands and body with clean, soapy water and not sharing utensils when eating helps. See your GP if you have any new symptoms.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Will my heart get better?
- What if I get sick again?
- Will I need surgery?



What supports are available?

RHD Australia - Rheumatic fever treatment tracker app

The rheumatic fever treatment tracker app will help you to manage your rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease. It is free and can be downloaded to your phone. Visit rhdaustralia.org.au.

Where can I learn more?

- **Take Heart** - About rheumatic heart disease: takeheart.tv
- **RHD Australia** - Information for individuals, families and communities: rhdaustralia.org.au