

# Catch Up

A newsletter for participants in the 45 and Up Study



## Your impact on cancer and heart disease research

**Heart disease and cancer are two of the most common and life-threatening diseases in Australia, but you are helping to drive research that is saving lives and improving medical treatment.**

Your participation in the 45 and Up Study has led to new research on lung cancer that shows a screening program, using the latest risk-prediction technology, could reduce deaths by up to 24%. Lung cancer is currently the deadliest cancer, killing 8,500 Australians a year, but survival rates significantly improve if the cancer is detected in its early stages.

The Study has also led to new discoveries around prostate cancer, the most common cancer for men. It's recently been shown that men with localised prostate cancer aren't being given enough information on radiation therapy, and are far more likely to get invasive surgery, even though the two have similar cancer survival rates. This finding has been used in medical education programs, which help more patients get the right treatment.

You've also told us that life after cancer can be just as good as it was before – which helps change people's mindset about cancer and reduce stigma. Survivors of melanoma, breast, prostate, and bowel cancers have rated their quality of life almost as highly as those who have never had cancer.

When it comes to heart disease, you have helped decision makers understand the social inequalities that affect a person's risk of a heart attack, and their quality of treatment after having one. Researchers have used the Study to show that a person with lower levels of education has a greater risk of a heart attack, and also that women hospitalised with a heart attack get poorer treatment than men. This evidence is being used to improve prevention and treatment practices.

The 45 and Up Study's partnerships with Cancer Council NSW and the Heart Foundation have supported this amazing research. Together, we can fuel more discoveries in the years to come.

## Your data in action

The information you've been providing in your 45 and Up Study surveys has powered critical health research:



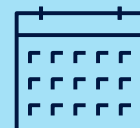
**61,000**  
surveys sent out in the past 12 months



**876**  
researchers have used 45 and Up Study data



**49**  
journal articles published in 2022



**18**  
years of 45 and Up Study survey data

Thank you for helping to improve the future health of all Australians!

Join our community of participants on Facebook:

[facebook.com/45andUpStudy](https://facebook.com/45andUpStudy)



## Message from our Chief Investigator

This is an exciting year for the 45 and Up Study, as we prepare to survey all participants for the fourth time since the Study began in 2005. We hope that once again you'll take part in the

**biggest survey of its kind in Australia** – and one of the biggest surveys in the world.



Hearing about your health and wellbeing, and how your lives have changed in recent years, is incredibly important.

**The information you share is of real value in how we design our health system and how we ensure that services are available for people at all stages of life.**

We thank you for the effort you put into answering our comprehensive survey questions. Ever since the 45 and Up Study started, it's been through your generosity that we can really make a difference to health outcomes in Australia.

We have **best-practice data security** arrangements in place to make sure the information you share is safe. Data from the 45 and Up Study is only made available to researchers who have ethics approval and adhere to our rigorous data access processes. All access to Study data is controlled and monitored by the Sax Institute.

If you want to know more about any aspect of the 45 and Up Study, you can reach us through the 45 and Up Coordinating Centre or through our website – check the back page of this newsletter for contact details.

On behalf of all of us in the 45 and Up Study team, thank you for your generous time and contribution!

**Dr Martin McNamara**

Chief Investigator  
45 and Up Study



## What's new in the next 45 and Up Study survey?

**This year, we begin sending out our fourth survey to all participants in the 45 and Up Study. It's time for you to share your experiences so that we can make our health services better and keep more Australians healthier for longer.**

"We're thinking about what information is going to be needed by researchers and decision makers over the next decade," says Dr Kerrin Bleicher, who leads the 45 and Up Study team as Director of Research Assets at the Sax Institute.

"To create this survey, we've met with dozens of experts across aged care, dementia, heart disease, cancer and wellbeing. We're harnessing that expertise to make sure we ask you the right questions."

It's been five years since we designed our last all-participant survey, and a lot has changed in our nation's health since then. "We've experienced a pandemic

and many of us have also suffered the impact of floods and bushfires," Kerrin says.

"Our survey reflects this, with new questions on major events that help explain what impact they have on our wellbeing."

We are also digging deeper into the experiences of carers, in response to the growing number of Australians caring for loved ones. "Carers have a wide range of experiences and needs, and having this information will help inform new services and support."

There are new questions about your lifestyle, including questions on sleep, strengthening exercises and social activities. It all helps researchers understand what shapes healthy ageing, leading to better health services and support.

"Every completed survey makes a big difference," Kerrin says. "We're so grateful our generous participants take the time to share their experiences with us."

The survey will be sent out to all participants over three years.



# Exercise means the world to this bike lover

**For Tanya Bosch, 66, riding a bike means happiness and freedom. If she's not on her city bike getting around Sydney, the 45 and Up Study participant is on her mountain bike in the Blue Mountains for the weekend, or even riding from Goulburn to Gundagai on a multi-day trip.**

"I love being in the outdoors, and riding in the bush is like therapy for me," Tanya says. "Meeting new people along the way is part of the fun."

Tanya, a retired cycling coach and World Masters Track Championship winner, spends more than ten hours a week exercising – there's the eight or so hours spent cycling, then a few more on a rowing machine and doing her regular Pilates classes.

She well and truly exceeds the recommended levels of weekly physical activity for adults, but so do most 45 and Up Study participants. The World Health Organisation recommends adults do at

least 150 minutes of moderate activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, over a week. Three-quarters of Study participants either meet this goal or go beyond it.

"My belief is if you don't move it, you lose it," Tanya says. "I've had lots of health issues, but exercise has kept me going."

When Tanya joined the 45 and Up Study in 2006, she had just been operated on for bowel cancer. "Interestingly, it was cycling that led to the diagnosis," she says. "My racing times were getting slower and we didn't know why."

The surgery was successful, though it triggered insulin resistance which Tanya manages with medication.

"I hope my experiences are a useful contribution to the Study," she says. "It's a wonderful thing to be part of."



Tanya's advice for an adult learning to ride or getting back on the bike after a long break is simple: get lessons. "People say you can't teach an old dog new tricks, but I don't believe that," she laughs. "I taught a lot of people in their 50s and 60s how to ride a bike, and I like to think they're still riding now."

## Our next research priorities

**We are always striving to increase the impact the 45 and Up Study has on your health. This year, one of our focuses is to support research into chronic conditions, which includes heart disease, cancer, arthritis and osteoporosis.**

A research project on a chronic condition can take more than a year to set up, as researchers wait for approvals to access all the data they need. That's precious time that could be spent on research that improves our health care.

Together with ethics committees and government agencies, we have developed a faster way of putting together

information from 45 and Up Study participants for researchers. We call this new approach the "Chronic Conditions Umbrella Program Linkage".

This will help us understand more about what factors influence chronic diseases, people's experience of treatment and long-term outcomes. We will share more details of the important work that is conducted through this new approach in the coming months.

In 2023 we continue to build the 45 and Up Study's biospecimen collection, made up of blood and saliva samples from Study participants. This year,

more than ten thousand people will donate to our collection and drive new research projects.

One project is investigating how best to predict the risk of common cancers, and then detect them, in the general population.

Another project is looking at the impact a person's genes have on their ability to protect their brain's health. This cutting-edge work could not be done without your generous donations.

As we continue with another year of invaluable health research, thank you for your contribution to the 45 and Up Study.





## You're helping to improve care for serious illness

**Each year, thousands of Australians experience serious illnesses that don't have a cure. However, we don't know enough about the care provided to these Australians – particularly how patients rate their own care.**

That's why we recently surveyed a group of 45 and Up Study participants about the treatment they currently receive for a life-limiting illness.

Thanks to their generous responses, we now better understand the expectations and needs of patients.

Participants' rating of their own care was generally positive. Almost three-quarters of participants said they always received care in their place of preference, and 87% said they were treated with dignity and respect by health professionals. Around two-thirds felt their care was well-coordinated, and 87% felt they were involved in decisions about their care as much as they wanted to be.

As well as surveying people receiving care, we also surveyed a broad group of Study participants about the care they'd like to get later in life.

The survey showed that many people have specific preferences. 89% of participants have someone in mind to make health decisions on their behalf, while half the participants have appointed an enduring guardian who can make decisions about their treatment and lifestyle.

Receiving care at home was a common preference, with 69% of participants choosing their home over a hospital, aged care facility or hospice.

These survey results have been shared with decision makers and will inform health service planning. We continue to spend time with researchers and planners in government to help them use findings like these to deliver more effective services.

### Complete your next survey online!

We encourage you to complete surveys online if you can – it's good for the environment, and it saves research dollars. Some follow-up surveys are being sent out this year or you may receive an invitation for a sub-study. Where possible, we'll include a link to complete surveys online with any invitation. Otherwise, simply get in touch and make the switch.

### Update your details

Please let us know if your contact details change so we can continue creating an accurate picture of how Australia is ageing. Staying in touch also means we can keep you up to date.



**Call our Infoline**  
1300 45 11 45



**Email us**  
45andUp@saxinstitute.org.au



**Update online**  
[www.saxinstitute.org.au/participants](http://www.saxinstitute.org.au/participants)



**Write to us**  
The 45 and Up Study  
GPO Box 5289  
Sydney NSW 2001

### About the Sax Institute

We're an independent not-for-profit that works with governments, health organisations and experts across Australia to help ensure health policies reflect the best and most up-to-date research evidence.

**CatchUp**  
45 and Up Study partners:



**YOUR PRIVACY** All the information you give us remains confidential and is used for health research only. We have comprehensive policies and procedures in place to keep your data secure. You can withdraw from the Study at any time and this will not disadvantage you in any way.