

Catch ▶▶ Up

A newsletter for participants in the 45 and Up Study



Your impact on brain health and dementia research

How can you protect your cognitive health as you age?

More than 400,000 Australians are living with dementia, and your participation in the 45 and Up Study is helping to advance research that supports better brain health and dementia prevention.

Thanks to your involvement, new research has shown that online lifestyle coaching can improve mental ability in older adults.

More than 6,000 45 and Up Study participants aged 55 to 77 took part in the study, which assessed mental ability before and after a personalised online coaching program — the largest trial of its kind aimed at preventing cognitive decline.

Participants received tailored online coaching, delivered in modules focusing on nutrition, physical activity, brain training and mental wellbeing, based on individual risk factors.

Researchers then followed participants for the next three years, measuring memory, reasoning and the ability to process new information.

The results showed that participants in the online coaching program had better cognitive scores throughout the three-year follow-up period.

Participants also reported better fitness and diet, along with lower levels of depression, with those in their 50s and early 60s showing the greatest benefit.

This research points to practical ways to support brain health as we age — staying physically active, eating well, keeping your mind engaged and looking after your mental wellbeing.

These findings show why your ongoing involvement in the 45 and Up Study matters. Every survey you complete helps power research that supports healthier ageing for Australians.

Your data in action

With your help, the 45 and Up Study is Australia's largest ongoing study into healthy ageing and one of the largest cohort studies in the world. Here's how your information has powered health research:



62,828

surveys sent out in the past 12 months



609

journal articles published using 45 and Up Study data



20

years of 45 and Up Study survey data

This research helps decision makers improve our health system and the future health of all Australians. Thank you!

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.

Message from our Chief Investigator

In 2025, we celebrated a remarkable milestone – 20 years since the very first participants joined the 45 and Up Study.

Two decades on, more than a quarter of a million people have helped create one of the most powerful and enduring health research resources in the world.



What makes the 45 and Up Study so powerful is not just its scale, but its longevity. By following people over time, the Study shows how health changes, what supports wellbeing, and how evidence can translate into real improvements in care and prevention.

Your ongoing participation continues to be central to the 45 and Up Study, which remains a core part of our research program. It has also made something new possible: the 18 and Up Study. Building on the success of 45 and Up, this new national initiative will recruit younger Australians into a long-term study to explore how health and wellbeing change across life – from early adulthood through to older age.

It's a bold step forward that extends the legacy you helped create, allowing researchers to understand how health evolves across generations. Make sure to read all about 18 and Up in the following story, and how you can help build this incredible project from the ground up.

As we continue to send out surveys to 45 and Up participants, I want to thank you for your enduring generosity. Every response adds another piece to the story of Australia's health, helping policymakers and researchers make smarter, fairer decisions for communities everywhere.

Your contribution over the past 20 years has been extraordinary – and together, we'll keep building a healthier future for everyone.

Dr Martin McNamara

Chief Investigator
45 and Up Study



Shaping the future of health research for us all

The success of the 45 and Up Study continues to inform Australia's health research and is laying the groundwork for a new national initiative, the 18 and Up Study.

We're pleased to share more about this new initiative and the important role 45 and Up participants will continue to play in building its next chapter.

The 18 and Up Study is a new multi-generational project that will follow Australians aged 18 and over for many years, just as 45 and Up has done. Our initial focus is to better understand mental health and wellbeing across different stages of life.

While mental health challenges are increasing among younger Australians, expanding this research will help build a clearer picture of when and why these challenges emerge. This will help researchers and policymakers identify opportunities for earlier support and

prevention, and ensure services are better designed to meet people's needs at different stages of life.

It is important to know that the 45 and Up Study is continuing and we will continue to survey and support all participants.

As a long-standing participant in the 45 and Up Study, you have an important part to play in this next chapter.

To help create the 18 and Up Study, in the coming months, we'll be providing information to all current 45 and Up participants that you can pass on to your children and grandchildren, should they be interested in learning more.

This connection will extend the legacy you helped create, generating evidence that supports better health for all Australians, now and into the future. More information about the 18 and Up Study will be available later this year.

Cancer survivor shares healthy living message on local airwaves

For Donald Alexander, 81, sitting behind the microphone at Bathurst's local radio station is simply part of his weekly routine.

A 45 and Up Study participant, Donald presents a breakfast show three times a week alongside communication students at Charles Sturt University, where he once lectured.

"I've been doing this for about five years," Donald says. "When I started to retire in my late 70s, I wanted to give something back to the community."

The program also gives him an opportunity to encourage listeners to look after their health. "Whenever I can, I remind people not to put off health checks."

A routine screening led to Donald being diagnosed with bowel cancer 14 years ago. Detected early, the cancer was successfully treated with radiotherapy, surgery and chemotherapy.

"Every year I give my surgeon a bottle of wine for doing such a good job."

Donald's community involvement extends beyond radio. He is president of Bathurst's Meals on Wheels board and drives a bus twice a week for the Bathurst Seymour Centre, which supports older residents.

That Donald is often older than the people he drives is a sign he's doing something right. He stays active with regular walks, sessions on his indoor exercise bike and nightly strength exercises. His spare time is spent reading, playing the bagpipes and enjoying time with his four daughters and their families.

"My health is just as good as it was before cancer," he says.



Research using the 45 and Up Study reflects this experience. People who have lived with melanoma, breast, prostate or bowel cancer report quality of life levels close to those who have never had cancer.

The 45 and Up Study continues to support a wide range of cancer research, helping improve detection and treatment while better understanding the lived experience of cancer. Donald's contribution plays an important role in this work.



Your impact on diabetes research

More than 50,000 participants in the 45 and Up Study are living with diabetes. Your contribution is helping drive research that improves care and treatment for this serious condition.

New research using data from 45 and Up Study participants suggests there may be hundreds of thousands more Australians living with diabetes than previously estimated. Some people may not be captured in official figures because their diabetes has not yet been diagnosed or recorded. While current estimates place the number at 1.5 million, the true figure may be closer to 2

million — information that is critical for planning better healthcare services.

Research has also uncovered important differences in how diabetes affects men and women. Men with diabetes are more likely to experience heart disease and problems affecting the legs, feet and kidneys, while women are more likely to experience other complications, including mental health conditions and some musculoskeletal disorders. Understanding these differences helps ensure healthcare planning better reflects the needs of everyone living with diabetes.

Research using the 45 and Up Study is also improving understanding of how newer medications that protect heart and kidney health are being prescribed, and where more people may benefit from these treatments.

These findings show the real-world value of your participation. By combining survey responses with health data, researchers can better understand how diabetes is treated — and how care can be improved.

The 45 and Up Study remains committed to research with meaningful impact. Together, we are helping to improve health outcomes for Australians living with diabetes.



Celebrating 20 years of the 45 and Up Study

The 45 and Up Study has now been running for 20 years, following the health of more than a quarter of a million Australians. This remarkable achievement has been made possible by the generosity of our participants.

When invitations were first sent out in 2006, it was unclear whether a long-term study of this scale could succeed. Nothing like it had been attempted in Australia before.

The response exceeded expectations, with more than 267,000 people joining and quickly establishing the 45 and Up Study as the nation's largest study of health and ageing.

Since then, participants have completed more than 700,000 surveys, creating an invaluable resource for researchers investigating conditions such as cancer, heart disease and dementia.

Research supported by the Study has informed major healthcare decisions, including the introduction of a national lung cancer screening program and updated guidelines on alcohol consumption to reduce cancer risk.

Participants have also taken part in numerous intervention studies, contributing to important discoveries about disease prevention and maintaining heart health as we age.

During COVID-19, the 45 and Up Study provided vital insights into vaccination attitudes and experiences of loneliness.

Surveys have evolved over time, shaped by participant feedback and changing research priorities. Questions now better reflect shifts in healthcare services and a growing understanding of what supports good health.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who has contributed their time and information over the past 20 years. We are proud of what the 45 and Up Study has achieved and look forward to what lies ahead.



Supporting brain health research

Researchers from the Australian Sports Brain Bank (ASBB) are using 45 and Up Study data to better understand brain injury and neurological conditions, particularly the long-term impact of contact sport on brain health. The ASBB is jointly hosted by the University of Sydney and RPA Hospital.

The examination of brain tissue plays a vital role in this research. The ASBB is especially interested in people who have played a lot of contact sport.

To learn more about brain donation and what it involves, visit the ASBB website: www.brainbank.org.au/make-a-pledge



Update your details

If your contact details change, please let us know. Staying in touch means you can keep contributing to vital research — and we can keep you informed.



Update online

www.saxinstitute.org.au/participants



Email us

45andUp@saxinstitute.org.au



Call our Infoline

1300 45 11 45



Write to us

The 45 and Up Study
GPO Box 5289
Sydney NSW 2001

Complete your next survey online

We encourage you to complete surveys online where possible — it's better for the environment and saves valuable research dollars. Where possible, we'll include an online link with survey invitations, or you can contact us anytime to switch.

Join our community of participants on Facebook:



facebook.com/45andUpStudy

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.