

# Catch Up

A newsletter for participants in the 45 and Up Study

## What you've told us about heart health



A healthy heart is key to healthy ageing. Thanks to the information you and thousands of others have shared with the 45 and Up Study, we're learning a lot more about how to keep the heart in good shape.

Do you get a decent night's sleep? It might be good for your heart if you do. Research using information from the Study shows that when it comes to sleep hours, there's a Goldilocks principle. The "just right" amount is six to nine hours a night: those who regularly slept more or less than that were more likely to develop heart disease, stroke, diabetes and high blood pressure.

In the morning, it might be best not to skip that bowl of cereal. Participants in the Study who made a habit of eating breakfast cereal tended to have lower blood pressure than those who didn't. Researchers are currently exploring whether different cereal types have different effects.

After your cereal, you'll probably want to give your teeth a morning brush. But what can your oral health tell you about your heart? Quite a bit, according to research using data from the Study. It showed those with tooth loss, or poor gum and tooth health, were more likely to develop and even die from heart disease. Poor oral health probably doesn't cause heart disease, the researchers say, but it might tell you it's time for a heart check-up.

All these valuable findings will help us to improve health care outcomes and were made possible by the information provided by you and other Study participants.

**Keeping active is another key to a healthy heart: read about the best ways to exercise inside this newsletter.**

## Thank You!

Welcome to our newsletter for participants in the 45 and Up Study. You are one of more than a quarter of a million Australians aged 45 and over who have generously agreed to share your health experiences with us.

The information you and many thousands of participants have provided is helping us gain a better understanding of how to stay healthy as we get older, and how to prevent or better manage conditions such as cancer, heart disease, arthritis, dementia and diabetes.

In this newsletter you can read about some of the things researchers have already found out about healthy ageing using information from the 45 and Up Study, in areas like heart health and exercise. You can also catch up on what we have in store for the Study in the years to come.

Ultimately, the 45 and Up Study will help us – and future generations – live healthier, more independent and fulfilling lives. We are grateful for your contribution to this exciting project.

Thank you!



# 267,153

**AUSTRALIANS AGED 45 AND OVER PARTICIPATE IN THE 45 AND UP STUDY**



## The benefits of vigorous exercise

We all know exercise is good for your health. But as you get older, are some forms better than others? Evidence from the 45 and Up Study suggests that while it's all good, the type that puts you in a sweat is the best. Study participants who regularly did vigorous exercise were more likely to live long and healthy lives than those who kept to a more gentle regime.

So if your idea of keeping active is taking long walks, that's great. But you might want mix it up with something that gets your heart pumping. It doesn't really matter what. You don't have to join a gym: some vigorous gardening might do the trick!

Another benefit of exercise that makes you huff and puff is that it may protect

against some cancers. Participants who did as little as 10 minutes a day of vigorous activity cut their risk of colon cancer by almost a quarter.

It pays to be careful, though: if you have a chronic condition or have never done vigorous activity before, you may want to consult your doctor first for some advice.

However you exercise, it's good to try to stay relatively active the rest of your time as well. Participants who sat four or fewer hours per day lived longer in general than those who sat for 11 or more hours a day.

So keep active, aim for some vigorous exercise if you can, and try not to spend too long on that couch!

## Message from our Chief Investigator

As the new Chief Investigator of the 45 and Up Study, I want to take this opportunity to thank the many thousands of you for your



contribution. Over 750 researchers and policy makers have used your information to shed light on important areas of health – including cancer, heart disease, mental health and diabetes – as well as social issues such as housing and independent living.

Findings from the Study revealed the true impact of smoking in Australia and played an important role in the government's decision to increase taxes on tobacco in 2016. More recently, researchers used the Study to highlight a link between depression and heart disease in middle-aged and older people.

We treasure the information you share with us. I want to assure you that it remains strictly confidential and is only ever used for health research purposes. Your information is securely stored and never released in any way that could allow you or your family to be identified.

We follow all State and Federal privacy laws and maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct, confidentiality and security.

Your continued participation is much appreciated and is critical to uncovering new insights about how to stay healthy. Please be assured that you can opt out of the Study any time you like, with no disadvantage to you whatsoever.

Once again, thank you for your participation – and I look forward to updating you on our progress in the months and years to come.

**Dr Martin McNamara**  
Chief Investigator  
45 and Up Study

### Where do participants in the 45 and Up Study live?



**52%**  
major cities



**45%**  
inner regional and  
outer regional



**3%**  
remote, very remote  
and not specified

## Healthy ageing devotee, 80, still run off his feet

The cliché about retirement is that it's when you slow down. That literally can't be said of 45 and Up participant Allan Wareham, who turns 80 this year. Allan is not only a marathon runner, he's one of the fastest for his age in the country.

"In 2015 I competed in the Australian Masters Athletics Half-Marathon in Hobart and I ended up not only winning for my age category but also setting a new Tasmanian record," says Allan, who lives in Sydney.

Allan says he decided to participate in the 45 and Up Study to give something back to the community.

**"I felt that maybe there's something that I've learned that I can pass along to the younger generation, in whom I have great confidence. It could be significant that I've survived as long as I have and that I'm happy with my life."**



Running is a hobby he only took up seriously on his retirement from a management position with IBM in 1996.

"I'd been a runner on and off for a number of years, but I became more serious about it and started running longer distances when I retired because I had more time," Allan says.

He admits to some slowing down, running "only" three half-marathons and 12 races of 10 kilometres or more in 2018.

Aside from running, Allan says he stays active with gardening and bushwalking. His tip for healthy ageing is to do what you enjoy.

"Running isn't everyone's cup of tea. But I think it's good to be doing something physical and something mental - something that stimulates that area between your ears."

For the latter, Allan says he follows the news, reads scientific papers and particularly enjoys discussions with his grandchildren.

"I'm looking forward to going to my granddaughter's wedding this year. I have 11 grandchildren, eight over the age of 21, and they are the joy of my life."

### Keep an eye out for your next survey!

The great strength of the 45 and Up Study is that it follows you, its participants, over time. Every five years, we send you a new questionnaire so we can find out how your health has changed – giving researchers valuable new insights into matters such as how conditions progress.

With the Study now in its 14th year, we started sending out the third five-yearly questionnaire in early 2018. With more than 200,000 survey forms to send out, this is a mammoth undertaking in its own right. Some of you will already have received your questionnaire forms, while others will be receiving this latest questionnaire in coming weeks and months. The questionnaire usually takes about 40 minutes to complete. Whether it's already with you or still to arrive, we do hope you will take this small amount of time to complete the

form. By doing so, rest assured you're contributing to a happier and healthier Australia!

The latest questionnaire enhances the information previously collected by adding new questions on wellbeing, electronic cigarettes, blood transfusion, family circumstances during childhood and technology use. Together, these additional questions will give researchers important new data that will ensure the Study retains its prominence as a vitally important asset in Australia's health research landscape.

You can fill in your questionnaire online, or you can have it sent to you in the mail and post it back to us – just let us know what you'd prefer via our contact details located on the back page.

### Join us on Facebook



It's amazing how much interesting health research and news comes out of the 45 and Up Study – all thanks to you, our valued participants. There's far more of it than we can possibly fit into an annual newsletter, so we have started a Facebook page to make it easy for you to stay in touch.

Have a look at our page to find all the latest news and information about what is emerging from the Study and other developments.

[www.facebook.com/45andUpStudy](http://www.facebook.com/45andUpStudy)

**Read future newsletters online - send us your email address! Details next page**



## Update your details

It's important to tell us about any change in your contact details so the Study can succeed in creating a "moving picture" of how Australia is ageing. It's also important we don't lose track of you so we can keep you updated about the Study's progress. So if you have new contact details we need to know – and providing your email address will make it easier for us to get information to you.

**You can update your details in a number of ways:**



**Call our Infoline**

1300 45 11 45



**Email us**

45andUp@saxinstitute.org.au



**Select "Update your details" in the 45 and Up section of our website:** [www.saxinstitute.org.au/our-work/45-up-study/for-participants](http://www.saxinstitute.org.au/our-work/45-up-study/for-participants)



**Write to us**

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## What does the future hold for the Study?

The 45 and Up Study isn't standing still. One of the most exciting things in the pipeline is a plan to build up a large collection of blood samples from Study participants. We're at the very early days with this project and are working on the best way to collect samples from those who are willing to participate. We're hoping for as many as possible, since the more samples we have, the more useful the collection will be for research.

This will add a whole new dimension to the Study, when combined with the health and lifestyle information you already provide us in the surveys. It will allow researchers to look more closely at the links between genes, biology and healthy ageing, and may help us get a better understanding of why some people develop certain diseases, while others don't. This information could lead to new ways to prevent or treat disease, based on people's genetic and biological make-up.

For example, researchers could use information from blood samples to look at how your genes influence your risk of heart disease or cancer; or how we can use genetics to better manage chronic conditions like diabetes. Other areas that could benefit include dementia, lung disease, mental health and neurological conditions like Parkinson's disease.

When we do find out new information, it's important that the people who craft our health policies hear about it too. That's why we're currently exploring better ways to brief decision makers across the health sector, making sure that evidence from the 45 and Up Study impacts on policies and programs designed to improve your health.

Our focus in all our future projects is to ensure that Australians are getting the very best out of the 45 and Up Study and the information that you and thousands of other participants are providing.



45 and Up Study partners:



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**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.