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Prevention key to stem the tide of chronic disease

An [Alzheimer's Australia report](#) released yesterday has revealed the staggering cost of the nation's dementia burden, with more than 400,000 Australians impacted by this insidious disease.

With 15-20 percent of dementia the result of stroke or a series of strokes (vascular dementia), the Stroke Foundation is calling for better awareness and detection of common risk factors to help stem the tide of this devastating condition.

Stroke Foundation Chief Executive Officer Sharon McGowan said the report highlighted the looming health burden hanging over the nation and the need for the community to take steps to reduce their risk of chronic diseases.

"We know there are increasing numbers of people in our community living with risk factors common to stroke and dementia, such as high blood pressure, obesity, poor nutrition and lack of physical activity," Ms McGowan said.

"High blood pressure is a leading risk factor for stroke and the cause of 50 percent of vascular dementia cases, causing damage to blood vessel walls, which may eventually lead to a stroke.

"Around four million Australians are living with high blood pressure and many don't know it. High blood pressure often has no symptoms, the only way to know your blood pressure is to have it checked.

"We're urging the community to take control of their health. A great first step is to head into your local pharmacy or see your GP to find out your stroke risk," she said.

Ms McGowan said more needed to be done to help Australians manage their chronic disease risk.

"Too many families continue to be devastated by strokes that could have been prevented. By making simple lifestyle changes or seeking treatment for chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, people could avoid the suffering and disability caused by stroke," Ms McGowan said.

"We need to help people understand their risk of stroke and other chronic diseases, and empower them to make the necessary changes to their lifestyle to avoid suffering a devastating health crisis.

"There are simple things we can all do to reduce our risk of stroke and dementia – manage your blood pressure, eat healthy, exercise, don't smoke and limit your alcohol consumption.

"Stroke does not discriminate – it impacts men and women at any age. A health check is a simple, and non-invasive way to discover your risk of stroke and other chronic disease."

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