

# FOCUS ON HEALTHY AGEING IN THE ACT

## Our healthy ageing report card

- Older persons in the ACT are generally healthy, live at home and have access to social support.
- Older persons in the ACT are making some healthy choices, but with room for improvement especially in relation to exercise and healthy eating.
- The proportion of the ACT population aged 65 years or more will almost double in the next 40 years (from 13% in 2017 to 22% in 2059).
- There is evidence that people of all ages can 'add life to years' and there are many opportunities and resources supporting older persons in the ACT to make healthy choices.

## Social indicators of health and wellbeing for older persons

**Most older persons in the ACT live at home (96%), and report their health to be excellent, very good or good (73%).**

**Life expectancy for 65 year old ACT residents has increased over the last ten years. The ACT has the highest life expectancy in Australia.**

**Of those Canberrans aged 65 years or older living in households who needed assistance, 13% stated that this need was fully unmet, while a further 4.9% stated that their needs were partly met.**

**In 2015, around 41% of Canberrans aged 65 years or older stated that they provided care for at least one other person.**

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015. Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Australian Capital Territory. Canberra, ABS.



**An overview of the health and wellbeing of older persons, aged 65 years and over who live in the ACT.**

## Healthy choices for older persons

**Most (93%) are non-smokers.**

**Less than half (45%) exercise enough.**

Even just a small amount of activity everyday can lead to health improvements, especially for people who are otherwise inactive.

**Almost half (48%) ate at least three vegetable serves per day, but only 7% met the National Health And Medical Research Council guidelines of 5-5 ½ serves per day.**

Vegetables can help people maintain a healthy weight and reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases. For healthy recipes see: [goodhabitsforlife.act.gov.au/recipes](http://goodhabitsforlife.act.gov.au/recipes).

**Five out of seven (71%) are either overweight (37%) or obese (34%).**

**One in five (21%) drank alcohol at levels that put them at risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury.**

For healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the life time risk of harm from alcohol-related disease.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) *National Health Survey: First Results, 2014-15*. Cat. No. 4264.0.55.001, Canberra ABS

## Service use for older persons



**GP visits average 9 per year which is less than the national average of 13 visits per year.**



**Most (78%) are immunised for influenza and over half (53%) are vaccinated for pneumococcal disease, with vaccination rates similar to older Australians generally.**

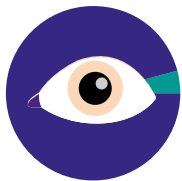
**451.1\* ACT  
216.9\* National**

\*per 1,000 population

**Older ACT residents accessed community mental health care services at more than double the rate of older Australians overall.**

## Health conditions for older persons

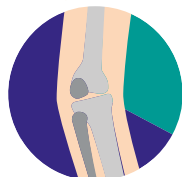
Most older persons are affected by chronic conditions. In the ACT, the most common health conditions for older persons relate to:



Eyesight (97%)



Circulatory system, such as heart attacks, heart disease, varicose veins as well as strokes and hypertension (60%)



Musculoskeletal and connective tissue, such as arthritis and scoliosis (64%)



Partial-to-full deafness (36%)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) National Health Survey: First Results, 2014-15. Cat. No. 4264.0.55.001, Canberra ABS

## Health and wellbeing activities

There are a wide range of health and wellbeing activities available in the ACT for older persons of all fitness levels.

*“Even in very advanced years, physical activity and good nutrition can have powerful benefits for health and wellbeing.”*



Source: WHO World Report on Ageing and Health 2015

## What is the ACT Government doing for older persons in the ACT?

The ACT Government is committed to enabling and supporting positive and healthy ageing in the ACT where older persons are respected, valued and supported to actively participate through initiatives such as:

- The ACT Active Ageing Framework which guides ACT Government interventions for active ageing.
- The Age Friendly Suburbs project which aims to improve infrastructure and facilities to make it easier for older residents to move in and around their local community.
- The Dementia Care in Hospitals Program which provides Canberra Hospital staff with education around falls, delirium and dementia.

## Did you know?

**Cancer incidence increases dramatically with age. Between 2011-2015, more than (58%) of all new cancer diagnoses among ACT men were in those aged 65 years or more; for women, this figure was 48%.**

54% males

43% female

The most common causes of death are ischaemic heart disease (e.g. heart attack) (21%), cancers of the digestive organs (e.g. bowel cancer) (14%) and cerebrovascular disease (e.g. stroke) (12%).

## Dementia



It is estimated that in 2016, there were 4,400 people in the ACT living with dementia, most of whom were aged 65 years or more. This is likely to increase to approximately 5,200 by 2020.

Increasing evidence is finding the SAME FOUR ‘modifiable risk behaviours’ have an influence on the likelihood of developing a wide variety of health conditions, including cancer, stroke, diabetes, heart disease and even dementia.

These risk factors are:

- Physical inactivity
- Unhealthy diet
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Tobacco use.

- The Health Promotion Grants Program which contributes to improved health outcomes and minimising the risk of developing chronic disease for people in the ACT. In 2016/17 – 2018/19, \$435,230 was awarded to the ‘Keep Your Life in Mind campaign’, which aims to raise awareness of, and promote the benefits of, modifiable lifestyle risk factors for dementia in the 40-65 year age group and a further \$107,250 for ‘Dance for Wellbeing ACT’ which provides people diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, Dementia and Multiple Sclerosis opportunities to improve muscle strength, gait fluidity, balance, cognitive function, power and confidence through dance.

For more information visit Access Canberra:

Phone: 13 22 81 | Visit the shopfront in Belconnen, Tuggeranong or Woden.

<https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au>