



BE SMART, PROTECT YOUR HEART!

Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) is the most common heart disease in people younger than 25.

HOW IT WORKS

1 Strep throat
Is caused by highly contagious Streptococcus bacteria

2 ARF*
An inflammatory disease affects connective tissues, especially in the heart, joints, skin, or brain.

3 RHD**
The heart valves become inflamed and scarred, causing narrowing or leaking of the heart valve. It becomes harder for the heart to function normally.

*ARF = acute rheumatic fever
**RHD = rheumatic heart disease

RHD commonly affects boys and girls aged 5 to 15 years. But it can also occur in younger children and adults.

DON'T IGNORE A SORE THROAT!

Common symptoms of strep throat:

- Sudden onset of sore, red throat
- Painful swallowing
- Fever and chills
- Headache
- Stomach ache
- Pus on tonsils
- Red, sandpaper-like rash

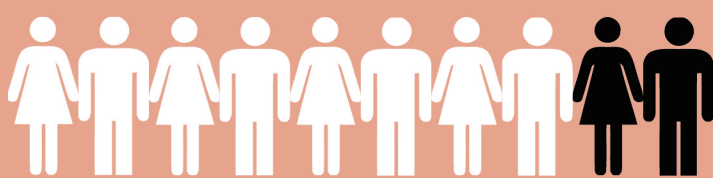


DID YOU KNOW? Symptoms of acute rheumatic fever usually begin 2–3 weeks after a strep infection.



33 MILLION

people around the world are affected by RHD



80% of people living with RHD live in developing countries



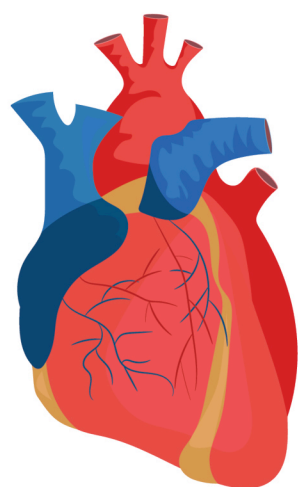
±2%

of school-going children in South Africa have a form of RHD



320 000

lives are claimed annually by RHD



LEFT UNTREATED, RHD CAN CAUSE:

- heart failure
- arrhythmias
- stroke
- endocarditis

DID YOU KNOW?

RHD and ARF are 100% preventable.

RHD AND PREGNANCY

Pregnancy can worsen symptoms of RHD.

Manage your condition and have regular checkups with your: **GP, obstetrician, anaesthetist, specialist physician or cardiologist**

DID YOU KNOW? Your heart works **30-50%** harder during a normal pregnancy.



reach

To stop rheumatic heart disease



THE HEART
AND STROKE
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SOUTH AFRICA



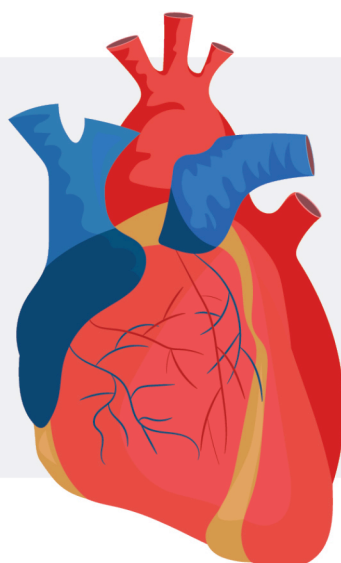
RHD: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Rheumatic heart disease is the most common heart disease in people younger than 25. It commonly affects children aged 5–15 years but can also occur in young adults.

WHAT IS RHD?

RHD is a complication of rheumatic fever in which the heart valves are damaged. If left untreated it can cause:

- heart failure
- arrhythmias
- stroke
- endocarditis



SYMPTOMS

Acute rheumatic fever:

- Sore throat
- Joint pain
- Fever
- Feeling sick
- Skin rash
- Uncontrollable movements
- Changes in mood
- Nodules (lumps under the skin)
- Shortness of breath and chest discomfort
- Weakness

Rheumatic heart disease:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Swelling
- Heart palpitations
- Breathlessness on exertion
- Swelling (oedema)
- Fainting (syncope)
- Stroke
- Fever associated with infection of damaged heart valves

HOW RHD IS DIAGNOSED

Tests used to diagnose rheumatic heart disease may include:

Physical examination

1.

Echocardiogram (echo)

2.

Electrocardiogram (ECG)

3.

Chest X-ray

4.

Cardiac MRI

5.

Blood tests

6.

TREATMENT

Minimum treatment length is 10 years or until the age of 21 (whichever is longer).



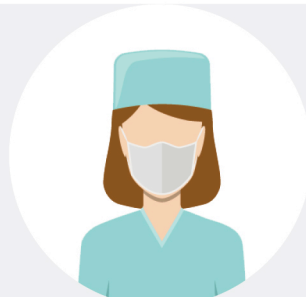
Antibiotics*



Blood thinners



Regular checkups



Surgery

Penicillin is most commonly used and given as an injection every **3–4 weeks.*



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