



# WHAT IS RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE?

Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) is a condition that develops when the body's heart valves and muscles are damaged by acute rheumatic fever. Rheumatic heart disease is a serious, disabling, sometimes fatal condition.

## What is rheumatic heart disease?



**1**  
 The Group A Streptococcus germ enters the bloodstream via skin sores or a sore throat



**2**  
 Germ travels through the blood system



**3**  
 The germ can travel to the heart



**4**  
 The body stands up a defence to attack the germ (immune response) that causes joint pain and damage to the heart



**5**  
 RHD can happen after one or more episodes of acute rheumatic fever, when damage to the heart becomes permanent

## What happens if you have acute rheumatic fever or rheumatic heart disease?



**1**  
 You need monthly LA Bicillin® (antibiotic) injections



**2**  
 You need regular heart scans (echocardiograms)



**3**  
 You need to see a heart doctor regularly (cardiologist)



**4**  
 You need to see the dentist regularly



**5**  
 You need to stay up-to-date with childhood vaccinations, yearly flu and pneumococcal vaccinations, and COVID-19 boosters

## HEALTHY SKIN, HEALTHY HEART

### What can you do to stop Rheumatic Heart Disease?



1

Keep your clothes and linen and body scabies free



2

Cover boils, scabies and skin sores until treated. Limit sharing of clothing or linen with a person with skin sores or scabies



3

Visit your local health service if you think you have scabies, skin sores or a sore throat

### Do you have any of these?



#### Sore throat:

Ask your doctor if you need antibiotics



#### Skin sores:

See your doctor and ask if you need an antibiotic injection



#### Itchy skin:

Ask your doctor if it is scabies and if you need scabies cream

If you have a skin infection or a sore throat, visit your local health service.

For more information on rheumatic heart disease, visit [www.darlingdowns.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.darlingdowns.health.qld.gov.au)



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