

RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE & ACUTE RHEUMATIC FEVER

Acute Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease

Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) are most commonly seen in central and northern parts of Australia, including Cape York. ARF and RHD are caused by a group A streptococcus (Strep A) bacteria which infects the throat and skin. Untreated Strep A infections can develop into ARF which can then lead to permanent damage to the heart valves. This is known as RHD. Although serious, ARF and RHD are 100% preventable and Apunipima's RHD Prevention Project is working to improve awareness and decrease rates of these conditions.

Apunipima's Rheumatic Heart Disease Prevention Project

Since 2019, Apunipima has been an active participant in the Australian Government's Rheumatic Fever Strategy, to develop and implement an RHD prevention project. The project aims to reduce the incidence and improve the management of ARF and RHD in Cape York.

Key project areas include:

- Working with community members to develop social marketing materials to raise awareness around ARF/RHD prevention
- Delivering community-based education in schools and alongside community groups
- Supporting health services with RHD resources and training
- Working with councils to support healthy living environments

our health in our hands