

## - Heart diseases

# Heart disease is our top killer

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CORONARY heart disease has been named Greater Geelong's biggest killer, claiming 1187 lives over five years.

The second-leading cause of death was dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, with 770 deaths from 2016-2020.

That was followed by cerebrovascular disease, which can include strokes, with 674 deaths, lung cancer (487), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (426), and influenza and pneumonia (343).

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) figures showed dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, was the leading cause of death for the Surf Coast from 2016-2020.

The data also showed that Golden Plains had the nation's highest age-standardised prostate cancer death rate at 22.3 per 100,000.

Golden Plains' leading cause of death was coronary heart disease, with prostate cancer coming in fifth with 21 deaths from 2016-2020.

Coronary heart disease was also the leading killer in ColacOtway, the Borough of Queenscliffe, and nationwide.

Barwon South West public health unit director Professor Eugene Athan said being physically active, eating a healthy diet and quitting smoking were lifestyle choices that could play an important role in preventing heart disease.

"The Barwon Health healthy communities unit is working across the Geelong region to promote environments and behaviours that increase active living and healthy eating, and reduce smoking rates," he said.

According to the Heart Foundation, coronary heart disease occurs when a coronary artery clogs and narrows because of plaque build-up.

After adjusting for population growth and age distribution, twice as many males died from coronary heart disease compared with females, the foundation said.

It noted key risk factors, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, were largely preventable. Other risk factors included being overweight, smoking, inactivity and alcohol consumption.