WORLD HEART FEDERATION

RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE (RHD)

>39 MILLION people are living with RHD

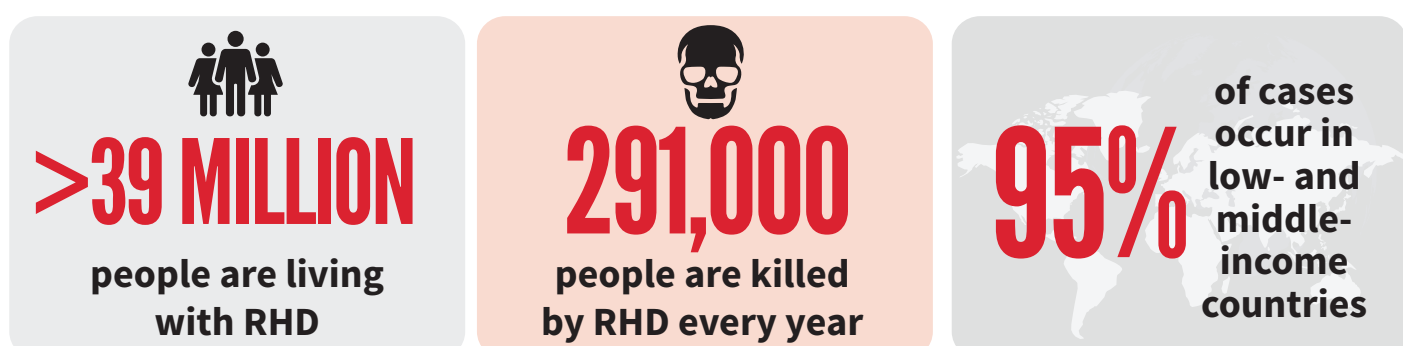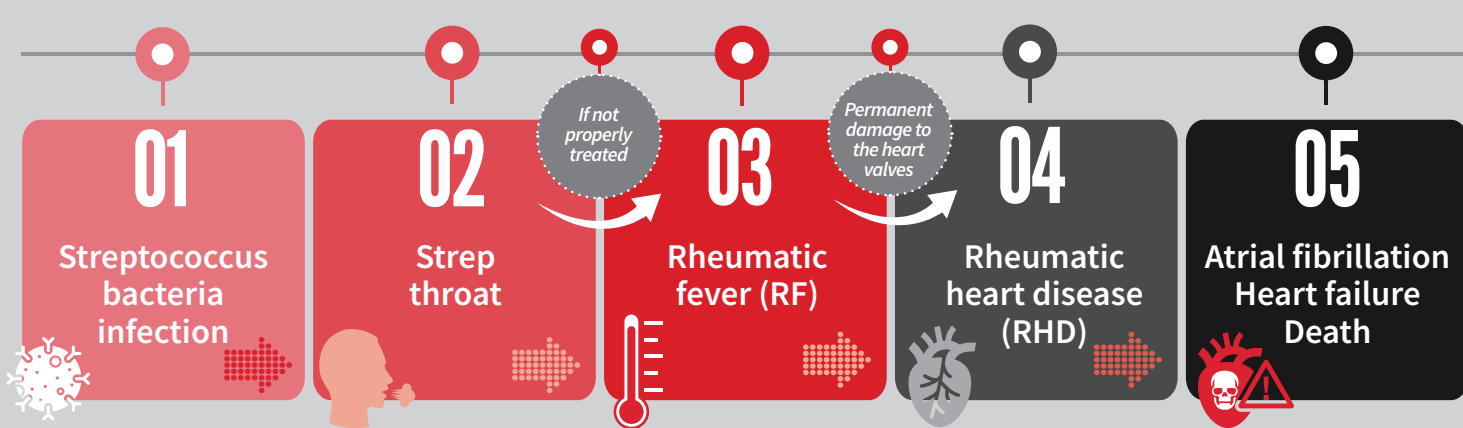**291,000** people are killed by RHD every year

95% of cases occur in low- and middle-income countries

💔 **Rheumatic heart disease** 💔 is a life-threatening heart condition which results from damage to heart valves caused by one or several episodes of rheumatic fever.

💔 **Rheumatic fever** 💔 is caused by an abnormal response of the body to infection with streptococcal bacteria, which usually begins as a sore throat or tonsillitis in children.

FROM SORE THROAT TO HEART FAILURE

01 Streptococcus bacteria infection

02 Strep throat

If not properly treated

03 Rheumatic fever (RF)

Permanent damage to the heart valves

04 Rheumatic heart disease (RHD)

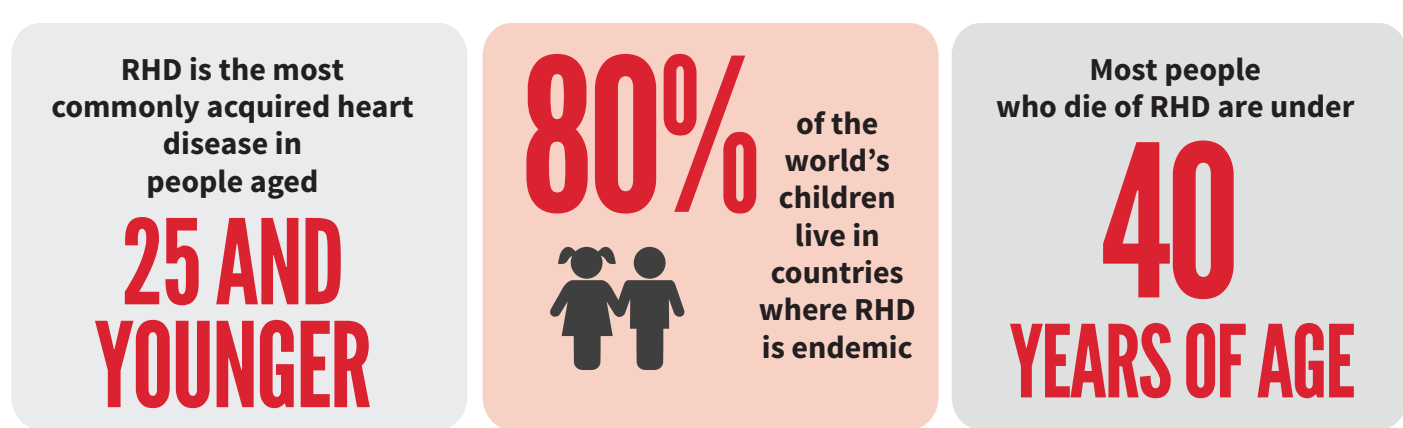**05** Atrial fibrillation Heart failure Death

WHO'S AT RISK?

Children aged 5 to 15 years old (but RF and RHD can occur at any age)

Children who suffer **repeated strep throat infections**
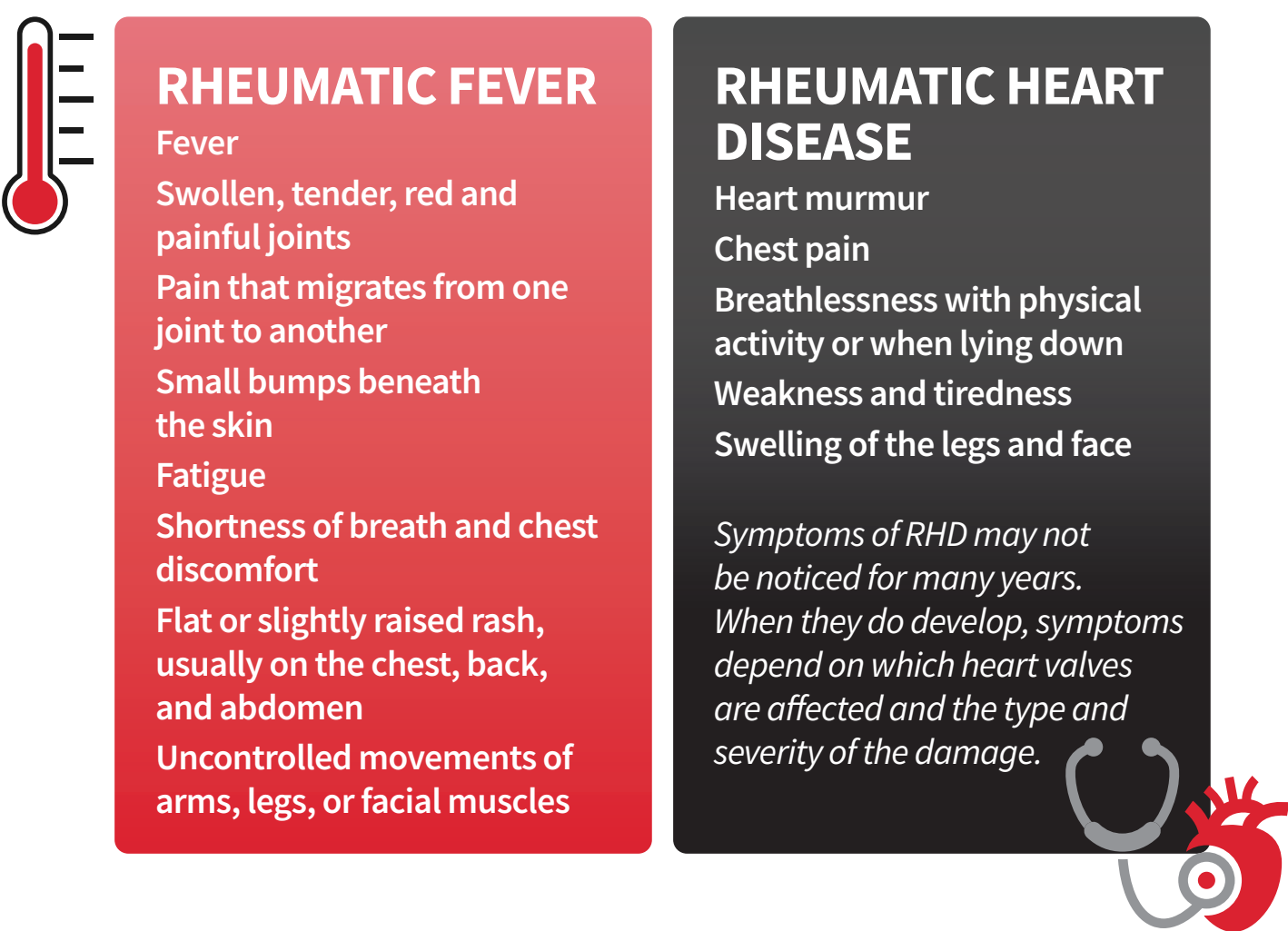
People in **low-income countries**

People living in certain **indigenous communities**

People who have immigrated from **countries where rheumatic fever is more common**

RHD is the most commonly acquired heart disease in people aged **25 AND YOUNGER**

80% of the world's children live in countries where RHD is endemic

Most people who die of RHD are under **40 YEARS OF AGE**

A greater risk of rheumatic fever is associated with overcrowding, poor sanitation and other conditions that can easily result in the rapid transmission or multiple exposures to strep bacteria.

SYMPTOMS

RHEUMATIC FEVER
Fever
Swollen, tender, red and painful joints
Pain that migrates from one joint to another
Small bumps beneath the skin
Fatigue
Shortness of breath and chest discomfort
Flat or slightly raised rash, usually on the chest, back, and abdomen
Uncontrolled movements of arms, legs, or facial muscles

RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE
Heart murmur
Chest pain
Breathlessness with physical activity or when lying down
Weakness and tiredness
Swelling of the legs and face

Symptoms of RHD may not be noticed for many years. When they do develop, symptoms depend on which heart valves are affected and the type and severity of the damage.

PREVENTION

Prevent strep throat infections

Treat infections with antibiotics (such as penicillin) to prevent rheumatic fever

Prevent additional streptococcal infection

Long-term antibiotics can reduce progression to more severe disease

TREATMENT

Anti-inflammatory drugs may be used to reduce inflammation and lower the risk of heart damage

Other medicines may be needed to **manage heart failure**

In severe cases, treatment may include **surgery** to replace or repair a badly damaged valve