



**KEEP YOUR  
HEART  
HEALTHY**

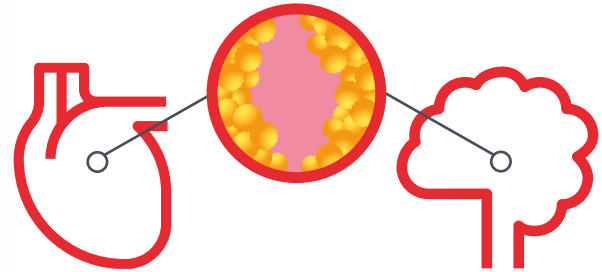
**to reduce your risk of heart  
and circulatory diseases**



## **What are heart and circulatory diseases?**

**If you've been told that you're at risk of heart and circulatory diseases, such as a heart attack or a stroke, this leaflet is a good place to start learning about how you can lower your risk.**

Heart and circulatory diseases kill 1 in 4 people in the UK. It begins when fatty material builds up in your arteries (the blood vessels that carry blood to your organs). If the arteries that carry blood to your heart get damaged and clogged, it can lead to a heart attack. If this happens in the arteries that carry blood to your brain it can lead to a stroke.



Artery in the heart  
getting blocked

Artery in the brain  
getting blocked

# Understanding your risk factors

You're much more likely to get heart and circulatory diseases if you have:



## High blood pressure

High blood pressure is when your heart and circulatory system are under strain. They have to work harder to pump blood around your body. This can damage your heart and blood vessels.



## Type 2 diabetes

Type 2 diabetes happens when your body doesn't make enough of a hormone called insulin. This damages your arteries and puts your heart health at risk.



## High cholesterol

This is when you have too little 'good' (HDL) cholesterol and too much 'bad' (non-HDL) cholesterol. High cholesterol levels increase your risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Your risk also increases if you:



## Smoke or chew tobacco

The chemicals in cigarettes and other smoking products like shisha and chewing tobacco damage your blood vessels, including the arteries that carry blood to your heart and brain.



## Drink too much alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol can increase your risk of having a heart attack, stroke, and developing vascular dementia and Type 2 diabetes.



## Don't move enough

Being physically inactive can increase your chances of developing high cholesterol, high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes.



### **Eat an unhealthy diet**

Eating too much saturated fat, sugar or salt can lead to weight gain, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.



### **Are overweight**


Being overweight or obese increases your cholesterol levels and blood pressure. You're also much more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes.



### **Feel stressed**

The feeling of stress won't lead to heart and circulatory diseases. But it makes you more likely to make lifestyle choices that are bad for your health.

**The good news is there are a lot of small changes you can start making today to really lower your risk.**



**“I LIVE IN THE  
PRESENT. WHAT CAN  
I DO TODAY, NOW, TO  
IMPROVE MY HEALTH?  
JUST KEEP MAKING  
BETTER CHOICES.”**

Jasmine, age 57

# Eat better

**The food you eat has a big impact on your health. But you don't have to go hungry or give up some foods forever.**

## Healthy foods

Eating lots of vegetables, fruit, wholegrains, some lean proteins and healthy fats will help your body work at its best. Try to cut down on foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt and sugar.

## Saturated fat

Some fats are bad for your health – saturated fat is one of those. Eating many foods high in saturated fat like fatty meats, cheeses, butter, cakes, and coconut oil can increase your cholesterol levels. Swap foods high in saturated fat for foods that contain unsaturated fats like olive oil, vegetable oil spreads, nuts, seeds, and oily fish.

## Salt

If you have high blood pressure, cutting down on salt is a good place to start. Eating too much salt raises your blood pressure over time. Most of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy.

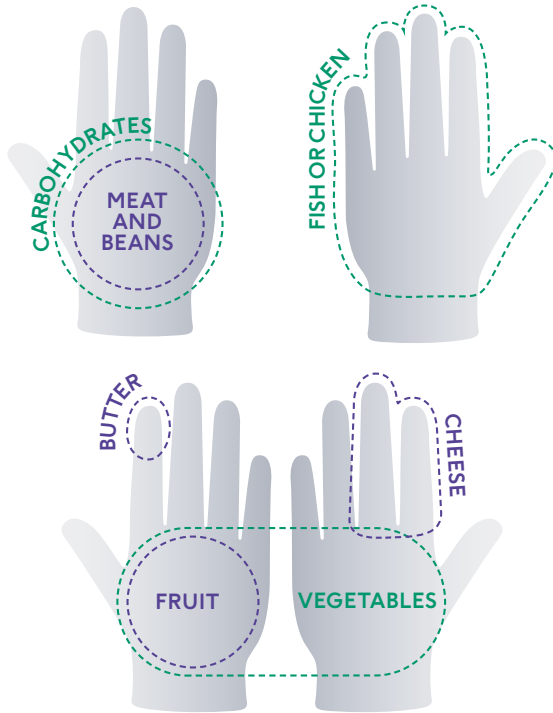
## Sugar

Eating too much sugar will eventually lead to weight gain, which raises your risk of heart and circulatory diseases. If you need to lose weight, make small and simple changes to cut back on sugar. Try to avoid foods high in added sugar like sweetened drinks, flavoured yoghurts, and sugary cereals.

## Food portions

A healthy diet isn't just about what you eat – it's also about how much you eat. Having good portion control will help you keep your calories in check and keep you at a healthy weight. A quick and easy way to measure portions is to use your hand.

## What does one portion look like?



# Look at food labels

Always read the label on packaged food. Try to eat mostly **greens** and **ambers**. The label should have guidance on portion size too.

	FAT	SUGARS	SATURATES	SALTS
<b>LOW</b> Healthier choice	3g or less	5g or less	1.5g or less	0.3g or less
<b>MED</b> OK most of the time	3.1g to 17.5g	5.1g to 22.5g	1.6g to 5g	0.3g to 1.5g
<b>HIGH</b> Just occasionally	More than 17.5g	More than 22.5g	More than 5g	More than 1.5g

All measures per 100g

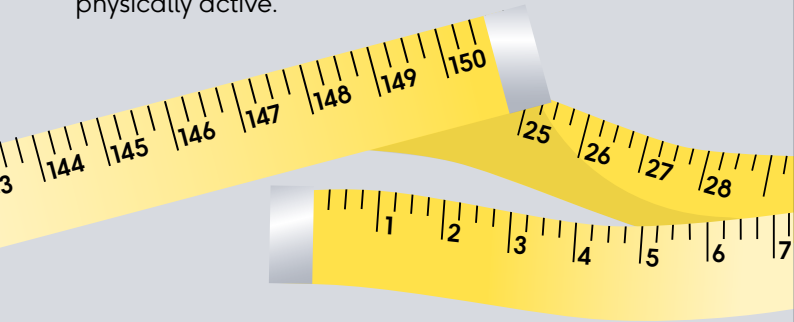
# Manage your weight

**Carrying a bit of extra weight may not seem like a problem, but it could be putting your health at risk.**

Being overweight can lead to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes. Too much fat, particularly around your waist, can affect your health.

If you need to lose weight, then it's time to watch what you eat and move more.

Being a healthy weight is about watching your portion sizes, swapping some unhealthy foods or snacks for healthier ones, avoiding packaged foods labelled in **red**, and being physically active.

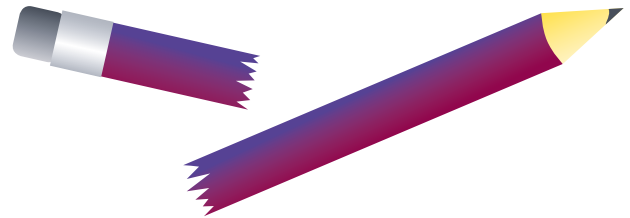


# Manage stress

**We all feel stressed at times – the feeling alone won't lead to heart and circulatory diseases. But it could lead you to make choices that aren't good for your health.**

You might be eating more than usual, choosing unhealthy foods, smoking, or drinking more alcohol than is healthy. You may also find it harder to take time out. If you or the people close to you have noticed you are making unhealthy choices or seem overwhelmed, you should take action.

Small changes over time can improve your life and your health.



# Quit smoking

**Giving up smoking is the best thing you can do for your health. Even if you've smoked for years, quitting will still reduce your risk of heart and circulatory diseases.**

- Twenty minutes after you quit smoking, your heart rate and blood pressure return to normal.
- After 2–3 days your sense of smell and taste improve.
- After 2–12 weeks exercise becomes easier and your breathing improves.
- After 1 year your risk of having a heart attack is half that of a smoker.



# Cut down on alcohol

**Not drinking alcohol will always be the healthiest choice. However, cutting down on how much you drink is still an important step for protecting your heart and overall health.**

It's important to keep within the recommended alcohol guidelines. Men and women shouldn't drink more than 14 units of alcohol each week. You should also try to have alcohol-free days each week.

**14 units =**



**Go for smaller drinks. Ask for single shots, small glasses and halves or bottles instead of pints.**

# Move more

## Being more active is one of the best things you can do for your health.

You don't need to hit the gym or run a marathon. You just need to walk about more and get your heart beating faster. Do something that makes you:

- breathe harder
- feel warmer
- feel your heart beat faster.

Even short bursts can help. Every time you are active for 10 minutes or more it counts.

Try to get your 10-minute bursts to add up to at least 30 minutes a day.



Being physically active is important for protecting your heart. It helps manage your cholesterol levels, blood pressure and weight.

All of these activities will help to improve your health:



Walking



Gardening



Housework like vacuuming



Taking the stairs instead of the lift



Swimming



Cycling



# 10 tips for a healthy heart

Remember, lots of small changes build up to make a big difference. Start now, and make heart healthy choices whenever you can.

- ✓ Add more vegetables to your plate
- ✓ Switch your crisps to unsalted nuts
- ✓ Use herbs and spices instead of salt
- ✓ Choose diet or sugar-free soft drinks
- ✓ Use your hand to measure portions
- ✓ Go for **green** on food labels
- ✓ Take the stairs instead of the lift
- ✓ If you smoke, pick a quit date and stick to it
- ✓ Choose half pints instead of full pints
- ✓ Move more, sit less

[bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk)

Heart transplants. Clot busting drugs. Pacemakers. Breakthroughs born from visionary medical research. Research you fund with your donations.

Heart and circulatory diseases kill 1 in 4 people in the UK. They cause heartbreak on every street. But if research can invent machines to restart hearts, fix arteries in newborn babies, build tiny devices to correct heartbeats, and give someone a heart they weren't born with – imagine what's next.

We fund research into all heart and circulatory diseases and their risk factors. Heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, vascular dementia, diabetes and many more. All connected, all under our microscope. Our research is the promise of future prevention, cures and treatments.

The promise to protect the people we love. Our children. Our parents. Our brothers. Our sisters. Our grandparents. Our closest friends.

You and the British Heart Foundation. Together, we will beat heartbreak forever.

**Beat heartbreak forever.**

© British Heart Foundation 2018, registered charity in England and Wales (225971) and in Scotland (SC039426) TC06/1018