

# BMI HEALTHCARE HEART HEALTH AWARENESS GUIDE

SPECIALIST  
HEART  
CARE

## I. LOVE YOUR HEART

Your heart is one of the most important organs of your body. Taking care of it is essential. **One in four people die from heart and circulatory disease in the UK<sup>1</sup>**, so it is important to be aware of the risk factors and follow advice to maintain a healthy heart.



## 2. WHAT IS HEART DISEASE?

**Coronary heart disease:** Build up of plaque (fatty materials) in coronary artery walls. This makes the walls thicker and makes it harder for oxygen and blood to pass through.



Condition becomes worse when the plaque is so thick, it prevents the arteries from supplying enough oxygenated blood to the heart.

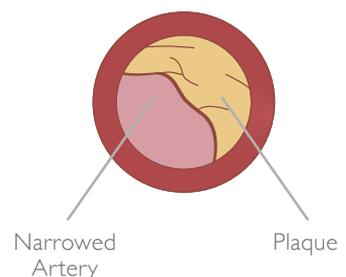
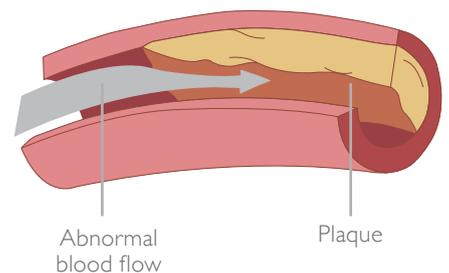


An area of the plaque can rupture causing a blood clot to form on top of the plaque. This can block the artery and stop the heart from getting blood and oxygen.

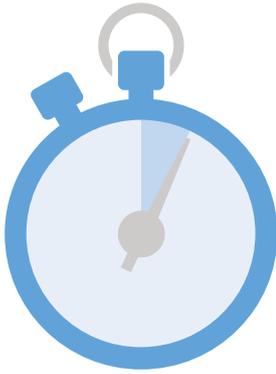
→ **Angina** - Chest pain and discomfort due to restricted heart supply

→ **Heart Attack** - a sudden loss of blood flow to a part of your heart muscle

### NARROWING OF ARTERY



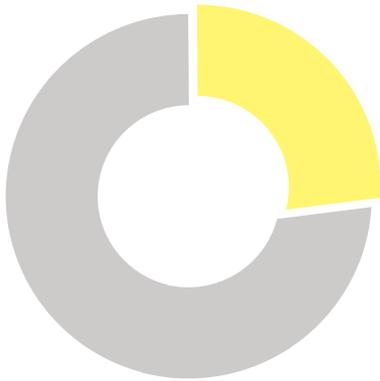
### 3. DID YOU KNOW?



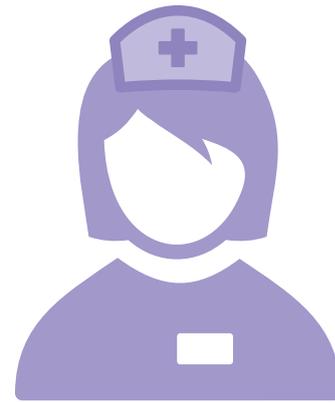
Every **3 minutes** someone **visits hospital** due to a **heart attack**<sup>1</sup>



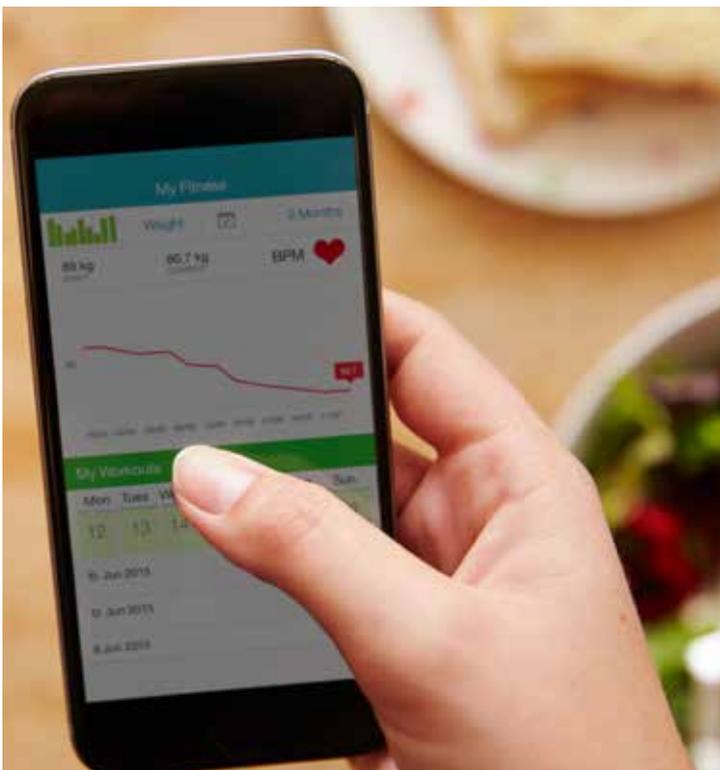
Around **7 million** people have **cardiovascular disease** in the UK<sup>1</sup>



**26%** of all **deaths** in the **UK** are caused by heart and **circulatory diseases** equating to an **average of 435** people **a day**<sup>1</sup>



**Coronary heart disease** is the cause for the **death** of nearly **23,000** people below the age of **75 years** old every year<sup>1</sup>



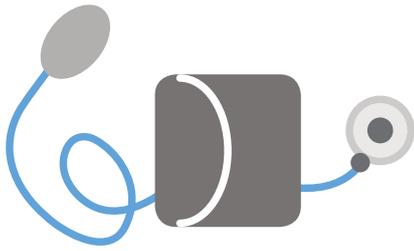
### 4. SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Symptoms and signs of heart disease may include<sup>2</sup>:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling dizzy and/or lightheaded
- Overwhelming feeling of anxiety
- Pain in other parts of the body
- Sweating or shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Coughing or wheezing

However, it is important to be aware that not all heart conditions have clear signs and symptoms, so getting your heart checked by a healthcare professional on a regular basis is the best way to make sure your heart is in good condition.

## 5. RISK FACTORS AND ADVICE



### HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE RISKS

Your heart pumps blood with every heart beat providing your body with the oxygen and energy it needs to function.

High blood pressure pushes your heart to pump blood harder around your body. This can result in your blood pushing your blood vessels at a greater force than they can handle. This can result in damaging your blood vessels and increasing the risk of heart disease.

**High blood pressure impacts nearly 30% of adults in UK**, but up to half of them are not receiving treatment for it! High blood pressure doesn't have any significant signs or symptoms, so it is important to get your blood pressure tested regularly.



**DR DAVID FOX**  
Consultant Cardiologist  
BMI The Alexandra  
Hospital

### HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE ADVICE

If your blood pressure is high you may be able to reduce it by increasing your physical activity, reducing your salt and alcohol intake, and eating healthily. However, there are some risk factors that may be related to family background. Medication may be recommended to you by a GP if needed. Further investigation by a specialist may also be required.



### HIGH CHOLESTEROL RISKS

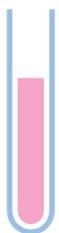
Cholesterol is a fatty substance in your blood which is created when the liver breaks down fat from the foods we eat. High levels of cholesterol can lead to fats being deposited on artery walls which can increase your risk of heart disease. High cholesterol levels can also be caused by an inherited problem called **familial hyperlipidaemia**, so if high cholesterol levels or coronary heart disease run in your family, discuss this with your GP.



**DR IFTIKHAR FAZAL**  
Consultant Cardiologist  
BMI The Park Hospital

### HIGH CHOLESTEROL ADVICE

Improving your diet by reducing intake of saturated fats, regular exercise and not smoking are a few things that could help you reduce your cholesterol level.



### HIGH GLUCOSE RISKS

High glucose levels are a result of high levels of sugar in your blood. A hormone called insulin takes the sugar from the blood to the body's cells. If the body fails to produce enough insulin it can result in developing diabetes which can double the risk of heart disease.

Symptoms of high blood sugar include feeling thirsty, needing to urinate frequently, tiredness and blurred vision<sup>3</sup>.



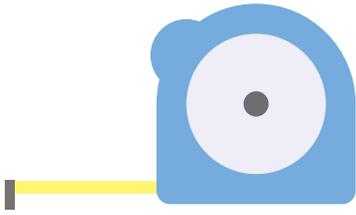
**DR ALI HAMAAD**  
Consultant Cardiologist  
BMI The Priory Hospital

### HIGH GLUCOSE ADVICE

Cutting out sugary foods and drinks may help to reduce your blood sugar levels. Exercise and drinking lots of sugar-free fluids may also make a difference. Make sure you monitor your blood sugar level regularly.



## 5. RISK FACTORS AND ADVICE



### OVERWEIGHT RISK

The proportion of weight on your body can have an impact on your risk of heart disease. A Body Mass Index (BMI) over 25 and/or a large waist circumference (generally over 37 inches for men and over 32 inches for women) increases your risk of heart disease. Body fat percentage can provide additional information to assess whether your size is healthy since weighing alone doesn't take into account the proportion of fat.

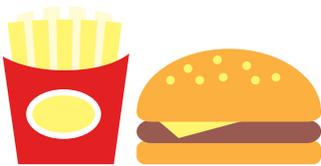
Being overweight puts you at greater risk of developing heart disease. Too much weight around your waist may be linked to high blood pressure and high lipid levels.



**DR ROBIN  
NORTHCOTE**  
Consultant Cardiologist  
BMI Ross Hall Hospital

### OVERWEIGHT ADVICE

If your measurements fall outside the recommended ranges you can eat a calorie controlled diet and exercise more frequently for a healthier body composition.



### DIET RISK

An unhealthy diet puts you at risk of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.



**DR CHRIS MILLER**  
Consultant Cardiologist  
BMI The Alexandra  
Hospital

### DIET ADVICE

Eating a healthy, balanced diet can significantly reduce your risk of heart disease and can help protect your heart from serious problems later in life. Even if you have existing heart disease, eating a healthy diet may help to improve your condition and can help protect against high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

1. Eating lots of fruit and vegetables can reduce cholesterol levels and helps reduce blood pressure, diabetes and obesity
2. Cut down on saturated fats (butter, lard, cream, meat, full fat milk, cheese and cream sauces)
3. Reduce your sugar and salt intake
4. Watch your portion size to maintain a healthy weight

#### Additional tips<sup>4</sup>:

- Choose healthy fats
- Swap white bread and pasta with wholegrain versions
- Eat more fibre as it helps to reduce the risk of heart disease – ideally 30g a day
- Reduce your salt intake to maintain a healthy blood pressure level
- Eat fish at least twice a week – include oily fish such as sardines

Try to become more aware of what you are eating by reading the back of food labels and learning more about nutrition. A good diet will help you stay heart healthy.



## 5. RISK FACTORS AND ADVICE



### ALCOHOL RISK

Drinking over the recommended amount of alcohol can increase your blood pressure and risk of heart disease. Alcohol can also affect your liver and contribute to weight gain, but you can keep your risk low by following our tips below.



**DR DEREK CONNOLLY**  
Consultant Cardiologist  
BMI The Priory Hospital

### ALCOHOL ADVICE

The UK national guidelines for alcohol intake is no more than 14 units a week for both men and women<sup>5</sup>.

#### Top tips to help you cut down on alcohol:

- Have at least two or three **alcohol free days** a week
- Work out how much you spend on alcohol a month and see how much you could save!
- Reward yourself with something other than alcohol at the end of a hard day
- Try non-alcoholic alternatives
- Drink slowly, in smaller measures and dilute alcohol with non-alcoholic drinks e.g. lemonade, tonic water, orange juice



### SMOKING RISK

20,000 cardiovascular deaths are linked to smoking every year<sup>1</sup>. Smoking can encourage the development of fatty plaque (atheroma) which makes the arteries narrow, reduces blood flow and increases the risk of heart disease. The amount of oxygen in the blood is reduced by carbon monoxide found in tobacco. Nicotine in cigarettes push your heart to work harder and increases blood pressure.



**DR JEROME MENT**  
Consultant Cardiologist  
BMI The Priory Hospital

### SMOKING ADVICE

Your risk of a heart attack reduces to about half the risk of a smoker after 1 year of giving up<sup>6</sup>. Quitting smoking will also reduce the risk of getting lung cancer and chronic bronchitis.

#### Top tips to help you stop smoking:

- Contact your local NHS stop smoking hotline **0300 123 1044**
- Remove temptations – throw away tobacco, lighters and ashtrays
- Keep busy – occupy yourself with activities to take your mind off cigarettes
- Tell family and friends – they can help and support you
- Medications - there are a number of treatments, such as nicotine replacement therapy, which you can use to help you give up



## 5. RISK FACTORS AND ADVICE



### LACK OF EXERCISE RISK

Lack of regular exercise can put you at risk of high cholesterol, blood pressure and heart disease.

### LACK OF EXERCISE ADVICE

30 minutes of exercise a day is highly beneficial for your body. As well as reducing your risk of heart disease, it can also help you:

- Increase your level of “good” (HDL) cholesterol
- Reduce your blood pressure
- Reduce your risk of getting diabetes
- Lose weight

There are easy ways to include extra exercise in your daily routine:

- Walk instead of taking the car
- Get off the bus or train a few stops earlier and walk
- Use the stairs instead of the lift



DR WILLIAM SMITH  
Consultant Cardiologist  
BMI The Park Hospital

## 6. HOW CAN BMI HEALTHCARE HELP?

It is important to make sure you are not at risk. If you need further help and advice contact us at BMI Healthcare where our dedicated medical team can provide you with support on tests, treatments, procedures and aftercare for your heart concerns.

BMI Healthcare is the UK's largest private healthcare provider with 59 private hospitals and clinics, with many offering cardiology services which can be covered with private medical insurance or by simply paying for yourself.



### For more information

For more information on heart health awareness and our cardiology services call **0808 101 0340** or visit [bmihealthcare.co.uk/treatments/cardiology](http://bmihealthcare.co.uk/treatments/cardiology)

- T&Cs
- 1 CVD Statistics – BHF UK FACTSHEET - <https://www.bhf.org.uk/-/media/files/research/heart-statistics/bhf-cvd-statistics---uk-factsheet.pdf?la=en> Accessed April 2017
  - 2 NHS Choices – Heart Attack conditions page - <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/heart-attack/Pages/introduction.aspx>
  - 3 High Blood sugar overview – <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Hyperglycaemia/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
  - 4 BHF Reducing your blood cholesterol guide – [https://www.bhf.org.uk/-/media/files/publications/heart-conditions/his3\\_0114\\_reducing-your-blood-cholesterol\\_a6.pdf](https://www.bhf.org.uk/-/media/files/publications/heart-conditions/his3_0114_reducing-your-blood-cholesterol_a6.pdf)
  - 5 Drinkaware – [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)
  - 6 NHS Health heart tips – <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Healthyhearts/Pages/Healthy-heart-tips.aspx>