



How healthy
is your heart?



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How's your heart health?

The heart is at the centre of the 'vascular system', which pumps blood around the body allowing every part of it to receive the oxygen and nutrients it requires whilst also removing waste products.

Vascular disease occurs when there is damage to this system, meaning that parts of the body do not receive an adequate blood supply. Conditions including coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease are all as a result of problems in the vascular system.

Vascular disease currently affects the lives of over four million people in England. It causes over a third of deaths (170,000 a year in England) and is responsible for one in every five cases when someone is admitted to hospital. It is the largest single cause of long-term ill health and disability, and can have a major impact on quality of life.

Some people are more at risk of developing vascular disease than others. It is important to know if you are at high risk so that you can take action to reduce your chances of developing the conditions associated with vascular disease.

How do you know if you're at risk?

Ask yourself these questions...

What's your health like?

Do you have...

- ♥ a previous history of heart attack or stroke?
- ♥ type one or two diabetes?
- ♥ high cholesterol?
- ♥ high blood pressure?
- ♥ a family history of inherited high cholesterol or heart disease?*
- ♥ erectile dysfunction?
- ♥ inflammatory conditions such as psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis?

What's your lifestyle like?

Are you...


- ♥ over the age of 50?
- ♥ overweight?
- ♥ a smoker?
- ♥ unfit, or not very active?
- ♥ not eating a healthy, balanced diet?
- ♥ feeling stressed?

If you answered yes to a number of these questions, then it may be worth chatting with your doctor to find out if you could be at risk of the conditions associated with vascular disease.

* As well as family history, there is also an inherited link to heart disease for people from South East Asia or of Afro-Caribbean descent.



**Vascular disease
is the cause of
nearly 35%
of deaths in
women and
men in the UK**

“ Women and men of all ages can learn from Richard’s example of healthy living.” 

Dr. Sarah Jarvis, GP

A heartfelt tale: Richard Evans’ story

After years of healthy living, Richard Evans took his foot off the pedal...literally.

Richard had always maintained a good level of fitness; he was a keen cyclist and had run the London marathon four times. He didn't smoke, and had a healthy diet.

But that changed in his 50's when Richard started a university course on top of his stressful job. He stopped exercising regularly, and noticed that he had started to drink more, and although he maintained a healthy balanced diet, he gained weight.

On top of this, Richard had a history of heart disease and high blood pressure. Tests also revealed that his cholesterol levels were too high.

With the encouragement of his GP, Richard started making positive changes to his lifestyle. As well as going on the appropriate treatment to bring down his blood pressure and cholesterol levels, Richard took up cycling again and decided to give up alcohol altogether.

Today Richard is as fit and active as ever, and with such a healthy outlook he refuses to rest on his laurels. At the age of 63 Richard is now training to be a clinical hypnotherapist!



Richard Evans staying fit and healthy

Richard’s risk factors

- Over 50
- Overweight
- Not very active
- Feeling stressed
- A previous history of heart disease
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol



What Richard did to reduce his risk

- Followed advice from his GP
- Took up regular exercise again
- Went on appropriate treatment to bring down his cholesterol levels and reduce his blood pressure
- Maintained a healthy weight with a balanced diet
- Reduced alcohol intake

What happens in an NHS Health Check?

A vascular check is made up of a number of simple tests. This will start with the doctor asking you about your age, gender and any medicines you take. They will also ask you if you smoke, what your diet and exercise habits are, and whether you are aware of any family history of heart disease.

Your doctor will then measure your height and weight before taking your blood pressure.

The vascular check also includes a simple blood test to assess the levels of cholesterol and glucose in your blood.

Using these results, your GP will advise you on what can be done to reduce your risk of developing vascular disease. This might include stopping smoking, increasing physical activity, or managing your weight.

About HEART UK

We at HEART UK – the Nation's Cholesterol Charity – are passionate about preventing premature deaths caused by high cholesterol and vascular disease.

We work with a number of partners to promote healthier lifestyle options, and raise awareness about the risks of high cholesterol and associated conditions. We campaign for better detection of those at risk, fund research into improved treatment, and support training of healthcare professionals.

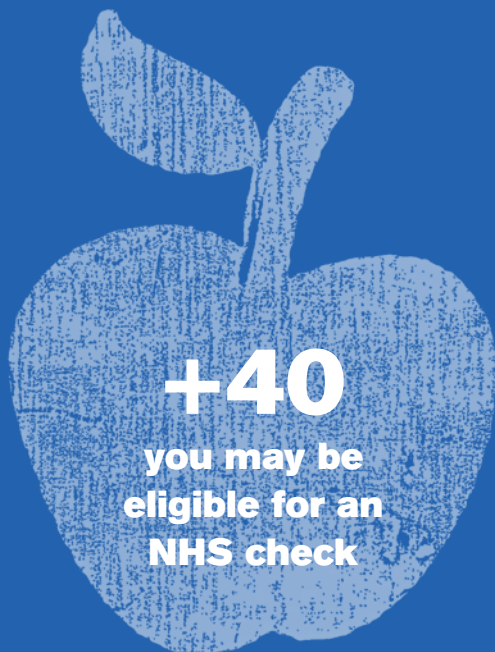
The charity provides information, advice and support, including a telephone helpline, website and membership scheme, for patients and their families affected by high cholesterol.

To find out more about the information contained in this leaflet or the work of HEART UK – The Cholesterol Charity – please:

Visit our website at www.heartuk.org.uk

Email our cholesterol helpline at ask@heartuk.org.uk

Call one of our trained nurses or dietitians on 0845 450 5988



+40
you may be
eligible for an
NHS check