

Reducing your risk of CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Which risks do you tick?

Complete the following checklist to assess your risk of Heart Disease.

Reduced risk of heart disease

- <45 years old
- Normal blood pressure (<140/90)
- Healthy cholesterol (<5.5)
- Non-smoking (active & passive)
- Healthy weight (BMI <25)
- Adequate physical activity (minimum of 30 mins most day)
- Healthy blood glucose levels

Increased risk of heart disease

- Male
- >45 years old
- High blood pressure (>140/90)
- High cholesterol (>5.5)
- Smoking (both active & passive)
- Overweight (BMI >25)
- Inadequate physical activity (less than 30 mins most days)
- Diabetes (high blood glucose levels)

What is cardiovascular disease (CVD)?

CVD refers to a wide variety of health conditions including high blood pressure, angina, heart failure, stroke and heart attack that are all caused by damage to your heart and/ or blood vessels. Typically these problems are the result of compromised integrity or efficiency of your blood vessels (which are like pipes supplying the whole body with blood) – either in terms of reduced elasticity or changing from a smooth inner lining which allows blood to travel easily

to all parts of the body to a more ‘bumpy’ surface with an increased risk of blockages due to the build up of ‘plaques’ on the inner wall of the blood vessels. All parts of your body need a constant blood supply but particularly your brain and the heart itself. If this supply becomes compromised then parts of these organs can die. When this occurs in the brain it is called a stroke and when it happens in the heart muscle – we call that a heart attack.

“In 2008, 131 Australians died from a heart attack each day, that equates to one death every 11 minutes”

National Heart Foundation

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Healthy Hearts, where do I start - how do I turn this around?

A diet for a healthy heart is the first step

1

- **Oily fish** e.g. salmon, tuna, sardines (at least 3 meals per week) – both canned and fresh do the job!
- **Use healthy fats** like olive oil, flaxseed oil (not heated), rice bran oil in your food preparation instead of vegetable oils and butter.
- **Fibre from legumes, soya bean products, oats, pectin** (citrus & apples) all help to reduce your cholesterol so consider ways to include or increase e.g. baked beans or porridge for breakfast, a soy linseed bread.
- **Fruit & vegetables** (at least 2 & 5 serves per day)
- **Garlic & chilli these are heart protective and add flavour** – whereas salt, another flavouring agent, can increase your blood pressure and increase your risk of CVD.
- **Nuts & seeds** – almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, pecans, macadamia, sesame seeds all help to promote good heart health. Must be eaten raw and unsalted.
- **Try replacing some of your coffee and black tea with green tea** – which is richer in antioxidants.
- **Limit saturated fat in the diet** – avoid hard and full fat soft cheeses, full fat dairy products, cream, chicken skin, fat on meats, processed meat such as sausages, burgers and salami, pastry, coconut milk, palm oil, fatty or fried take-away foods, packaged cakes, biscuits and chips.



Exercise is an important key

2

30 minutes of exercise everyday will take you a long way towards good heart health – check out all the individual risks it addresses:

- Helps maintain weight control
- Helps decrease high blood pressure
- Helps decrease the risk of diabetes and therefore CVD
- Makes your heart stronger
- Improves your mood and sleep

www.findthirtyeveryday.com.au/index.aspx



Decrease your stress levels and connect with people around you

3

Are you surprised to see social isolation and depression in the list of risks for CVD? Did you already know that being happy makes us healthier and this appears to be particularly true when it comes to your heart. So what can we do to improve our happiness? Consider these ideas:

- **Invest in your relationships** - Whether or not someone has good quality relationships in their life plays a key role in whether or not they are happy.
- **Start a new hobby or activity or improve your work life** - Another important ingredient of life satisfaction is whether or not you feel like you have enough enjoyable challenges in life. We like to feel that our skills are being put to work and that we are constantly growing and learning. Work can be a great way to get this feeling for some people.
- **Group exercise anyone?** - recently lots of people are rediscovering the dual benefit of group exercise (outdoor fitness classes, walking clubs, aqua aerobics, pilates). Keeping you fit while being in a social environment at the same time – getting to meet and mix with new people in a fun and different environment.
- **Regular specific relaxation strategies** - Massage? Meditation? Fishing? Yoga? Golf? We are all different and it's good to identify what it is that helps you to feel truly relaxed and then practice it...regularly!

Resources: www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/fats/Pages/trans-fats.aspx
www.quitnow.gov.au/
www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults.aspx