

Choose Healthy Stuff

Chest
Heart &
Stroke

This booklet helps you understand
the factors you can control to increase
your chances of **BEING HEALTHY** and
avoiding heart disease or a stroke



This booklet is part of Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke's Well NI Programme, which is a range of health promotion services for businesses, the community and individuals.

For more information, please contact healthpromotion@nichs.org.uk or phone 028 9032 0184.

**WE'RE
ON YOUR
SIDE**

No one wants to be ill but so often the choices we make everyday can cause ill health, now or in later life.

What Is Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)?

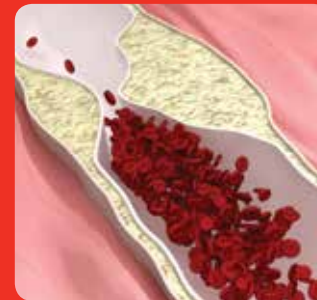
Basically it's the medical term for any illness of the heart or blood vessels. The most common forms are a heart attack or stroke.

• Heart Attack

A heart attack happens when there is a blockage in an artery supplying the heart, so the heart muscle itself no longer gets blood. Oxygen can no longer reach this part of the heart which affects its ability to work properly.

• Stroke

A stroke is similar to a heart attack but this time the blocked artery means oxygen can't get to part of the brain. It can also be caused by a burst artery which causes damage to the brain.



For more information about the symptoms of a heart attack or stroke and what action to take, go to:

www.nichs.org.uk/heartconditions

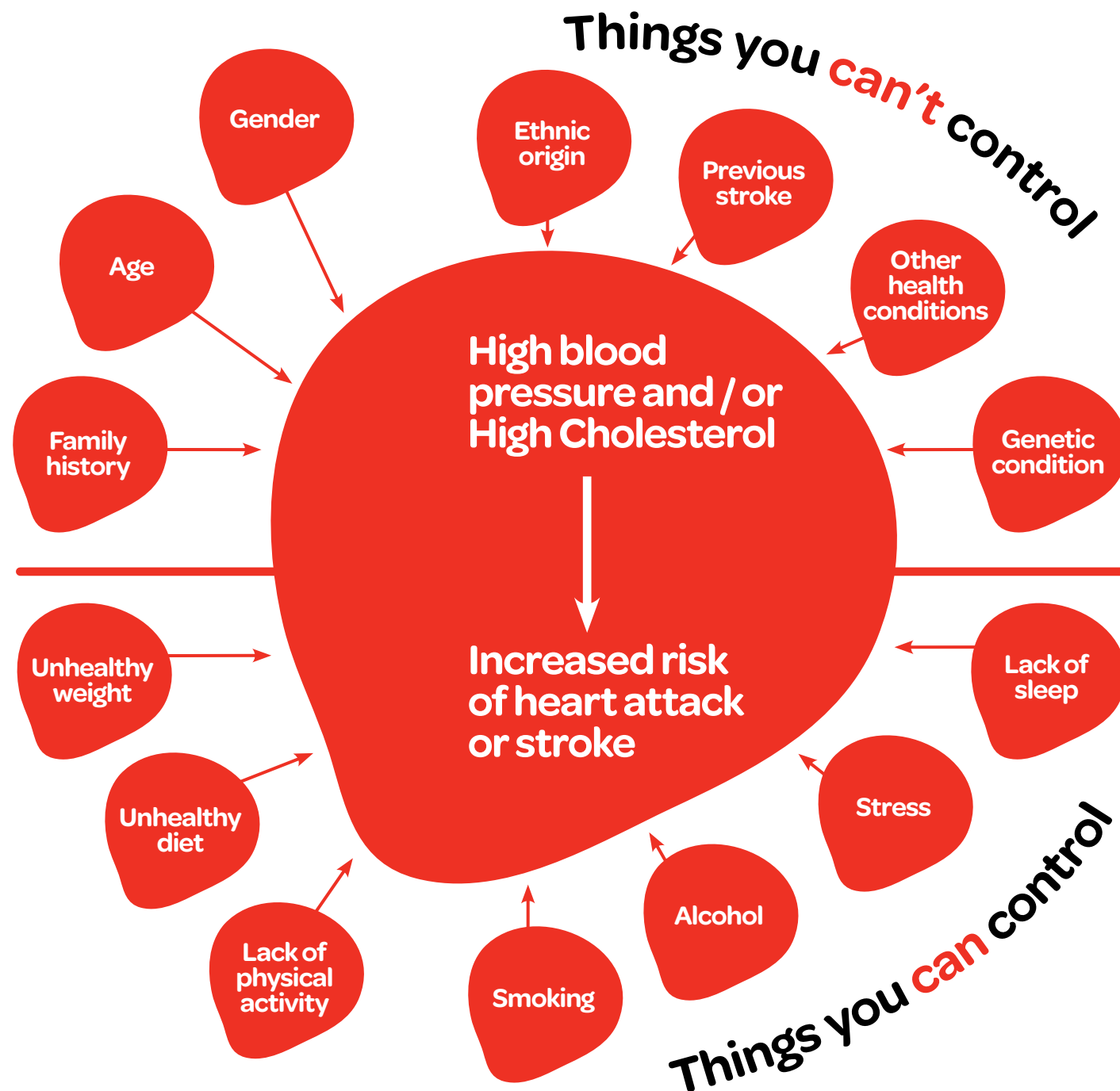
www.nichs.org.uk/stroke

What Can I Do To Reduce My Risk?

Like everything in life, there are some things we have no control over.

- **Family history:** if your siblings or parents had a heart attack or stroke at an early age (under 55 for men or under 65 for women), your own chances will be higher.
- **Age:** the risk of heart attack or stroke increases with age.
- **Gender:** the risk of heart attack and stroke increases with age for both men and women.
- **Ethnic origin:** people with an Afro-Caribbean or South-east Asian background have an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.
- If you have **already had a stroke** or mini-stroke (TIA), a heart attack or angina you have a greater chance of having another stroke or heart attack.
- **Other medical conditions:** If you have diabetes, sleep apnoea, or atrial fibrillation (AF), a heart rhythm, a heart rhythm disturbance which can develop at any age, your risk of having a stroke is significantly increased.
- **Genetic conditions** which make your blood more likely to clot, affect your blood pressure or cholesterol levels (eg. Familial Hypercholesterolaemia).

If you are concerned about any of these risk factors, please speak to your GP.



Reducing the Risk of Heart Attack and Stroke

Having high blood pressure or high cholesterol can increase your risk of having a stroke or heart attack.

There are a number of risk factors that contribute to high blood pressure and high cholesterol. But there are lifestyle changes you can make which can increase your overall health and wellbeing and reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke.



Watch your weight



Eat a balanced diet



Keep physically active



Stop smoking



Moderate your alcohol intake



Manage your stress levels



Get enough sleep

Know your numbers – get it checked!

For more information go to
www.nichs.org.uk/choosetobehealthy



The more risk factors you have, the greater your chance of developing these illnesses.

Keep An Eye On Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force within your arteries when your heart pumps blood around your body. High blood pressure is also known as Hypertension.

Why Is High Blood Pressure A Problem?

- It puts stress on your heart and the walls of your blood vessels.
- It is a BIG risk factor for stroke.
- There are no physical warning signs so get it checked!

What Should My Blood Pressure Be?

Your GP or nurse can tell you if your blood pressure is too high or too low.

High blood pressure is 140/90 mmHg or higher. If you have diabetes your blood pressure should be no higher than 130/80 mmHg

What Can I Do?

- ✓ Maintain a healthy weight
- ✓ Exercise regularly
- ✓ Get enough sleep
- ✓ Reduce stress levels
- ✓ Reduce salt
- ✓ Stop smoking
- ✓ Reduce alcohol
- ✓ Don't binge drink
- ✓ Get checked

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a type of fat which the body needs, but if there is too much in the blood it can clog your arteries.

There are two types of cholesterol:

- “Good” cholesterol (HDL) takes fat away from your artery walls.
- “Bad” cholesterol (LDL) sticks to your artery walls and causes a fatty build up.

Triglycerides are another type of harmful fat that can harden and narrow the arteries.

Why Is High Cholesterol A Problem?

It can cause fatty deposits which thicken the artery walls making them narrower. This can lead to a heart attack, angina or stroke.

What Should My Cholesterol Be?

When your cholesterol is measured, you may be given a total figure or it may be split into good and bad cholesterol. Total cholesterol is only an indication so it is important to understand the breakdown into good and bad types.

Total cholesterol should be below 5.0 mmol/L
HDL should be above 1.0 mmol/L for men and above 1.2 mmol/L for women
LDL should be below 3.0 mmol/L
Triglycerides should be below 1.5 mmol/L

What Can I Do?

- ✓ Eat less saturated fat eg. butter, cakes, pastries, fat on meat and fast food
- ✓ Stop smoking - a chemical in cigarettes causes HDL (good) cholesterol to decrease and hardens artery walls, making them rougher and easier for LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides to stick to.
- ✓ Exercise more (it increases the “good” cholesterol)
- ✓ Reduce alcohol intake
- ✓ Get checked



**WE'RE
ON YOUR
SIDE**

Watch Your Weight

The more fat in your body, the more fat in your blood, which can give you high cholesterol. And the heavier your body, the harder your heart has to work which can give you high blood pressure.

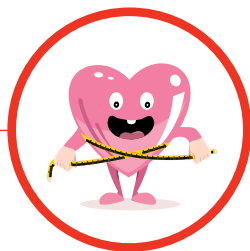
When calories eaten equal calories burned ▶ you'll maintain your weight.



Eat more calories than you burn off ▶ you'll put on weight.



Eat fewer calories than you burn off ▶ you'll lose weight.



Tips To Help You Lose Weight

- ✓ Keep a diary to see how much you really eat.
- ✓ Watch your portion size.
- ✓ Snack on healthy stuff like fruit, veg, yoghurts.
- ✓ Switch to low fat / light cheese, yoghurts, and spreads, and drink semi - skimmed milk.
- ✓ Eat foods containing fibre eg wholemeal bread, brown rice - they'll keep you fuller for longer.
- ✓ Trim all the visible fat off your food – e.g. the rind on bacon - it's NOT the best bit!
- ✓ Cut back on alcohol as it contains "empty calories".
- ✓ If you feel hungry, you might just be thirsty so drink some water.
- ✓ If you still feel hungry, distract yourself. You'll feel hungrier sitting watching TV than if you're busy.
- ✓ Get more active so you are using up more calories as well as eating fewer. (Good distraction too!)
- ✓ Set yourself a goal.
- ✓ Don't expect too much too soon. The best way to lose weight is at a rate of 1-2kg (2-4lbs) each week.
- ✓ Consider joining a weight management group, as often support from other people helps.

P.S. Being unhealthily underweight can cause irregular heartbeats and can also affect your heart muscle which can cause heart failure.





Eat A Balanced Diet

A healthy diet is about having a balanced diet so your body gets all the nutrients it needs, as well as maintaining a healthy weight, blood pressure and cholesterol level.

The **EATWELL** guide shows us which food groups to eat and in what amount, in order to achieve a healthy and balanced diet. Portions can be measured with your hand or everyday objects.

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving contains

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Energy 1046kJ 250kcal | Fat 5g | Saturated 1.3g | Sugars 34g | Salt 0.9g |
| 12.5% | LOW | LOW | HIGH | MED |
| 7% | 6.5% | 38% | 15% | |

of an adult's reference intake.
Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ / 167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars



Eat less often and in small amounts

Eatwell Guide

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.



Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day

Eat more beans and pulses, 2 portions of sustainably sourced fish every week, one of which is oily. Eat less red and processed meat

NOTE: The Eatwell Guide shows the proportions of a healthy diet over the course of the week. It does not have to be split as shown for every meal or even every day.

6-8 a day

Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and / or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day

Oil & spreads

Choose unsaturated oils and use in small amounts

Per day:

2000Kcal 2500Kcal

= ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

Eat A Balanced Diet (cont)

Fruit & vegetables

- We need at least 5 different fruit and veg a day
- 1 portion = a handful
- Give us vitamins and minerals
- Give us energy which is released slowly
- 150ml juice or smoothie counts as 1 portion only – drinking more than this then counts as a high sugar food



- Choose leaner cuts of meat and limit red and processed meat to 70g per day

Dairy & alternatives

- Adults need 3 portions a day
- Children need 4 portions a day
- 1 portion = the size of a matchbox/ 250ml glass milk
- Source of calcium, vitamins, minerals and protein
- Choose low-fat and low-sugar products
- When buying alternatives, choose unsweetened, calcium-fortified versions



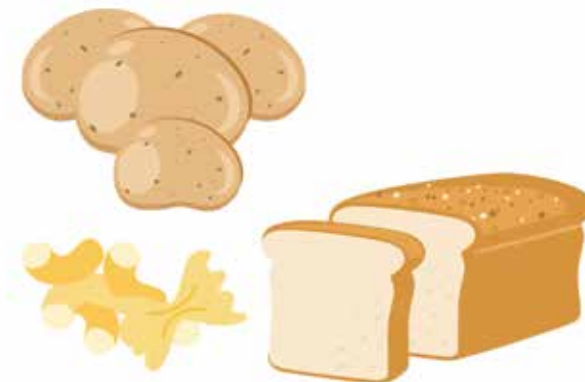
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat & other proteins

- Eat some foods from this group
- 1 portion = a playing card size
- They all provide protein to build and repair muscles
- Beans and pulses are good, healthy alternatives to meat and are low in fat
- Other non-meat alternatives include tofu, bean curd and mycoprotein (e.g. Quorn)
- Aim for two 140g portions sustainable fish a week (one of which should be oily)



Oils & spreads

- Choose unsaturated fats from plant sources, such as olive oil, rapeseed oil or sunflower oil
- Lower fat spreads as opposed to butter can help reduce saturated fat intake



Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta & other starchy carbohydrates

- Should make up a third of our diets – base meals on starchy foods
- Choose wholegrain varieties. These are high in fibre which helps lower cholesterol and keeps us fuller for longer.
- 1 portion = a handful
- Contain carbohydrates which gives us energy
- Gram for gram, this group contains less than half the calories of fat

Foods high in fat, salt & sugars

- Includes chocolate, cake, biscuits, soft drinks, butter & ice-cream
- Not needed in the diet, so eat less often and in small amounts
- 1 portion = size of a yo-yo
- Eating too much can lead to weight gain as they contain lots of energy
- Check the label for sugar, fat and salt content



Eat A Balanced Diet (cont)

Hydration

- Aim for 6-8 glasses fluid a day
- Includes water, low fat milk, teas and coffee
- Limit consumption of fruit juice and smoothies to no more than a combined total of 150ml per day as they are high in free sugars (sugars that have been added during processing, or honey, syrup and fruit juice)

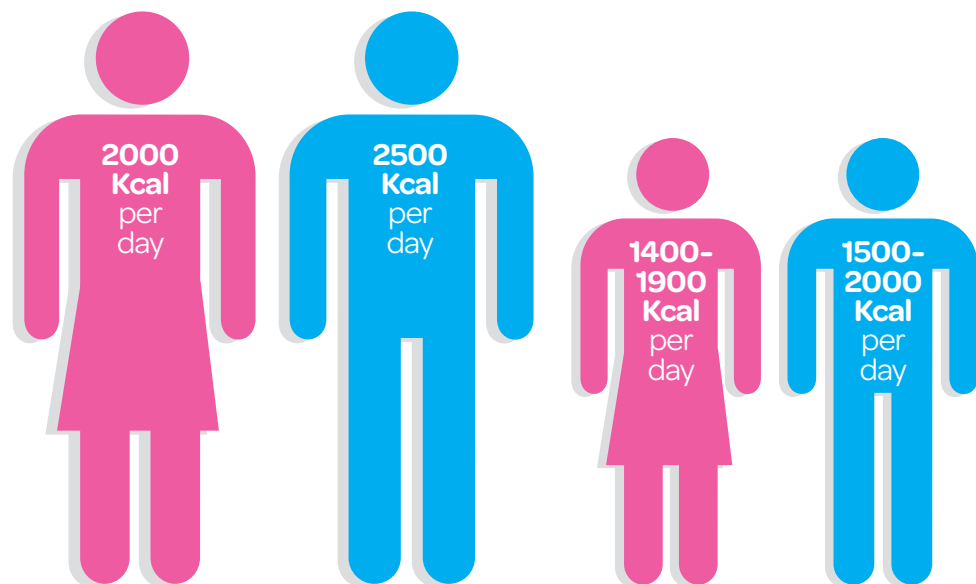


- The average woman (age 11 or over) needs 2000 calories a day, while the average man (age 11 and over) needs 2500 a day
- Girls (aged 5-10) need between 1400-1900 a day; boys (aged 5-10) need between 1500-2000 a day
- When we eat more than we need, our bodies store the excess as fat.

- Need to balance calories consumed with calories burned to maintain a healthy weight
- All fats are high in calories, so should be limited in diet

Calorie Consumption

- How much energy (calories) we need depends on gender, age and how active you are



Healthy Eating Doesn't Mean Buying Expensive Food

- ✓ Frozen or tinned fruit and veg contain the same vitamins and minerals but last longer, have no waste and are cheaper but avoid fruit in syrup.
- ✓ Tinned fish contains the same heart friendly omega 3 oils but is cheaper than fresh fish. But buy tins with the fish in fresh spring water, not brine (salt water) or oil. Tinned tuna does not count as oily fish.
- ✓ Stock up on pasta, rice and tinned fruit, veg or beans, when there is an offer on. They last for ages.
- ✓ Buy foods when they are in season as they're cheaper.

- ✓ Bulk up meals with veg and pulses. They are cheaper than meat.
- ✓ Apples and bananas cost less than chocolate and crisps.
- ✓ Make packed lunches for school and work. You can ensure they're healthy and they cost less than a cafe.
- ✓ Porridge oats (hot or cold with yoghurt or fruit) are a cheap, filling and healthy breakfast.

Salt Is The Enemy Of Blood Pressure!

Max 6g (1 teaspoon) of salt per day for adults, less if you have high blood pressure. Children should have no more than 5g of salt per day.

Reduce salt by:

- ✓ Most foods already contain salt so avoid adding more.
- ✓ Get out of the habit of adding salt during cooking or at the table. Taste it first.
- ✓ Use herbs, spices or pepper to season food.
- ✓ Try not to use salt alternatives.
- ✓ Read food labels to check salt content and choose the lowest.
- ✓ Cut down on salty snacks eg. crisps and salted nuts.

Food Labelling

- Food labelling tells you how many nutrients are in the food we are buying.
- They can help you choose between foods and pick foods lower in calories, fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt.
- Colour-coded labels allow you to tell at a glance if they are **high**, **medium** or **low** in fat, saturates, sugar and salt
- Choose products with more greens and ambers and fewer reds.



The table below shows how the amounts of each category that are called **low (green)**, **medium (amber)** or **high (red)**.

A Guide to Eating Healthy

| | Low per 100g | Medium per 100g | High per 100g | High per portion |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Fat | <3.0g | >3.0g - <17.5g | >17.5g | >21g |
| Saturates | <1.5g | >1.5g - <5.0g | >5.0g | >6.0g |
| Total sugars | <5.0g | >5.0g - <22.5g | >22.5g | >27g |
| Salt | <0.3g | >0.3g - <1.5g | >1.5g | >1.8g |

How to read food labels

- Food labelling can be shown as per portion (in the example below a portion is one grilled burger) or per 100g.
- When you look at the information “per portion” remember that this “portion” may not be the same size as the amount you will actually eat.
- If you are comparing one brand or food type with another, you need to look at the figures per 100g, to make sure you are comparing like with like.
- The amount of calories in the portion or 100g (whatever the label says) is the “kcal” figure.
- The figures in grams are the actual amounts of that nutrient in the portion or 100g. The colour coding shows whether this amount is considered to be low, medium or high.
- Many food labels also show a % figure which is how much of your body’s daily calorie or nutrient requirement that food provides.
- The % is referred to as “Reference Intakes” (RIs) and unless the label says otherwise is based on an average sized woman who does an average amount of physical activity per day, so they are only a rough guide and not a target.

Each grilled burger (94g) contains

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Energy 924kj 220kcal | Fat 13g | Saturates 5.9g | Sugars 0.8g | Salt 0.7g |
| 11% | 19% | 30% | <1% | 12% |

of an adult’s reference intake.
Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 966kJ / 230kcal



Keep Physically Active



Every Little Helps. Being more active isn't just about going to the gym or playing sport. Making small changes in your everyday life all adds up to getting the balance right between the calories you eat and the energy you use up.

- ✓ Walk up the stairs – don't take the lift.
- ✓ Pace up and down while talking on the phone.
- ✓ Walk to the local shops or to leave the kids to school.
- ✓ Instead of dozing in front of the TV, get up and walk around the room when you feel sleepy.
- ✓ Have a quick walk during your lunch hour or after dinner in the evening.
- ✓ Get off the bus one or two stops early and walk from there.
- ✓ If you have a dog start to walk further or faster, or more regularly.
- ✓ If you have a car, wash it by hand instead of going to a carwash.

So Is That Enough?

Making small changes will reduce your chance of ill health. However, your heart is made up of muscle and your breathing is controlled by muscles and they need to be kept fit. This is called cardiovascular fitness. So you still need to do moderate or vigorous physical activity to keep your heart, lungs and blood circulation system in good working order.



How Much Physical Activity Do I Need To Do?

Children and teenagers need to do at least **420 mins of moderate or vigorous physical activity** per week (60 mins x 7). Adults and older people need to do **150 mins of moderate physical activity** per week (30 mins x 5) or 75 mins of vigorous activity. You can do it in 10 minute bursts throughout the day.

Here are some examples of what you can do:

| | How You'll Feel | Examples |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Moderate Physical Activity | Heart beating faster Sweating Can still talk Can't sing | Walking fast, cycling, hiking, pushing a lawnmower, doubles tennis, basketball, water aerobics |
| Vigorous Physical Activity | Heart beating faster Sweating a lot Breathing hard Can't talk | Jogging, swimming fast, riding a bike on hills, football, rugby, singles tennis, aerobics, martial arts |

What are the benefits?

- ✓ Lower blood pressure
- ✓ Increase good cholesterol
- ✓ Better cardiovascular fitness
- ✓ Lower stress levels
- ✓ Helps weight loss
- ✓ Stronger muscles and joints
- ✓ Improves your frame of mind
- ✓ Makes you feel good
- ✓ Helps you sleep better
- ✓ All ages should also do muscle strengthening and flexibility exercises twice a week eg heavy gardening, body weight exercises.
- ✓ If you increase physical activity, you may lose weight, and it will also lower your LDL (bad cholesterol).
- ✓ Research shows that physical activity stimulates enzymes which remove LDL (bad cholesterol) from the blood.
- ✓ Physical activity also increases your HDL (good cholesterol) which aids the removal of LDL (bad cholesterol) from the blood.

Stop Smoking



We all know that smoking is bad for your health but what exactly does it do? Smoking damages your heart and your blood circulation, increasing your risk of angina, heart attack, heart failure and stroke.

- ✓ Smoking causes over 2,300 deaths per year in N. Ireland, which is 6 deaths per day, and robs 10-15 years of healthy life.
- ✓ 1 in 6 of all deaths in Northern Ireland is attributed to smoking.
- ✓ Chemicals in cigarettes cause HDL (good) cholesterol to decrease. They harden artery walls, making them rougher and easier for LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides to stick to.
- ✓ It raises your pulse and your blood pressure.
- ✓ Carbon monoxide takes the place of oxygen in your blood which makes you feel tired and lacking in energy, and can cause chest pains.
- ✓ It damages your lungs which can lead to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), which can make breathing difficult. It can also lead to lung cancer.
- ✓ Premature ageing.
- ✓ Many smoking related deaths are not sudden, for example, COPD is a lifelong and distressing disease.
- ✓ £££ - And then there's the effect on your wallet! 20 cigarettes cost around £9.40 (2016 prices) so smoking 20 a day costs you £65.80 a week or £3421.60 per year.



So What Are The Benefits Of Quitting?

Stopping smoking can have a big impact and it's never too late to quit. If you smoke 20 a day, by quitting you will:

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 20 minutes | Your blood pressure and pulse returns to normal | | |
| 24 hours | The carbon monoxide disappears from your blood | £9.40 SAVED | You've SAVED 220 minutes of your life |
| 48 hours | There is no nicotine in the body | £18.80 SAVED | You've SAVED 7 hours of your life |
| 3 days | Breathing becomes easier and energy levels increase | £28.20 SAVED | You've SAVED 11 hours of your life |
| 3-9 months | Coughs, wheezing & breathing improves | £874-£2623 SAVED | You've SAVED 14-41 days of your life |
| 5 years | Congratulations! Your risk of having a heart attack is half what it was when you were a smoker | £17,108 SAVED | You've SAVED 55 days of your life |
| 10 years | Your risk of having a heart attack is now the same as someone who has never smoked | £34,216 SAVED | You've SAVED 2 years of your life |

- ✓ Work out your smoking habits and be ready to change your routine to avoid the triggers and situations you smoke in
- ✓ Set a date, tell family and friends and stick to it
- ✓ Put the money you save in a jar so you can see it building up
- ✓ Think about how to deal with tempting situations, like going to the pub or having a stressful day
- ✓ Ask your doctor or pharmacist for help and support. You are 4 times more likely to quit successfully if you get professional help and nicotine replacements.

Check out www.nhs.uk/smokefree for more tips and a Quit Kit, or go to www.want2stop.info/stop-smoking-services to find a stop smoking service near you. Text QUIT to 70004 for SMS support

Moderate Your Alcohol Intake



Drinking more than your recommended daily amount of alcohol increases your chance of heart attack and stroke.

- ✓ It increases your blood pressure.
- ✓ It affects your cholesterol level.
- ✓ It makes you put on weight because it contains calories, though it has no nutritional value

- ✓ It stops your body burning fat. Your body needs to get rid of alcohol as a priority, so all other processes, like absorbing nutrients and burning fat, are forced to slow down.

So how many calories are in alcohol?

| Alcohol | Calories | Food equivalent |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| 3 pints of lager | 546 kcal | 2 slices of pepperoni pizza |
| 3 bottles of alcopops | 510 kcal | large fries |
| 2 pints of cider | 420 kcal | chicken fillet burger |
| 2 large glasses of red wine | 450 kcal | blueberry muffin |
| 1 vodka and energy drink | 139 kcal | 3 biscuits |
| 3 pina coladas | 1275 kcal | 4 cheeseburgers |

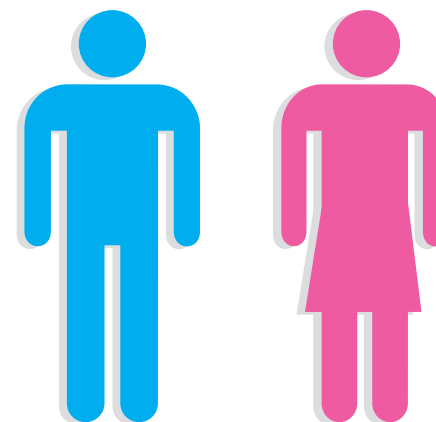
So you can see that alcohol can be the calorie equivalent of eating a second meal!



What Are My Recommended Daily Units?



There is no completely safe limit for alcohol as everyone's body is different.



Men and women are not advised to regularly drink more than

14 units per week. These should be spread evenly throughout the week, leaving several alcohol free days. The 14 units should not be "saved up" to drink in one day.

What is 1 unit? The number of units in a drink depends on the strength and size of the drink, but roughly....



PINT OF BEER
= **2.3** UNITS



PINT OF CIDER
= **2.6** UNITS



1 MEASURE OF SPIRIT
= **1.4** UNITS



ALCOPOP
= **1.1** UNITS



GLASS OF WINE
= **2.3** UNITS



BOTTLE OF WINE
= **9.4** UNITS

There is some evidence that small amounts of alcohol can protect you from heart disease and stroke but we

don't recommend that you drink alcohol as a way of reducing your risk.

Manage Your Stress Levels



Stress is a natural reaction in the body designed to give short bursts of heightened energy or awareness such as the “fight or flight” reaction to help us run away from danger.

However, nowadays the body is more likely to experience stress because of worries about relationships, money, work, unemployment, or ill health.

Pressure can be good for us as it helps us get things done, but what if the crisis doesn't go away? We can be so busy dealing with the problems that we don't realise we are stressed. We have to listen to our bodies....

Signs of long term stress:

- ✓ Being unable to get restful sleep
- ✓ Eating more comfort foods
- ✓ Drinking or smoking more than usual
- ✓ Having less energy to take exercise
- ✓ Not feeling motivated to see people or get things done
- ✓ Worsening memory or concentration
- ✓ Weakened immune system so more coughs and colds
- ✓ Back pain and headaches
- ✓ Stomach and bowel problems

Chest
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Coping Strategies For Stress

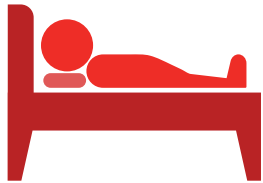
Extended periods of stress lead to a vast range of health related problems such as high blood pressure and increased risk of blood clots. These are worsened by the ways that we choose to cope with stress, such as smoking, alcohol or comfort eating, which make us even more at risk of heart disease or stroke.

Managing your stress in a healthy way is important. The best approach is to identify what is stressing you and try to change it. But that isn't always possible.

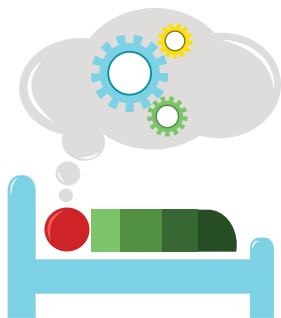
So here are some other things you can try:

- ✓ If you can't change the situation, try to **change how you react** to it.
- ✓ **Make sure you eat well.**
- ✓ **Try to sit down with other people to eat meals.**
- ✓ **Eat “happy foods”** – some foods contain nutrients that naturally make us happy, such as bananas, oranges, walnuts, small amounts of chocolate, turkey, small amounts of red meat and hot peppers.
- ✓ **Cut down on** tea, coffee and energy drinks which all contain **caffeine** if you feel anxious or panicky, or are having problems sleeping.
- ✓ **Exercise** – this uses up excess energy, improves blood circulation and lowers blood pressure. It also helps clear your mind and helps you sleep.
- ✓ Try to get a better night's **sleep** – make your bedroom as dark, quiet and relaxing as possible.
- ✓ **Don't take naps** during the day and try not to think about sleep too much.
- ✓ **Get organised** – getting things done helps stop your mind feeling overloaded.
- ✓ **Share** – a problem shared is a problem halved. If you feel you can't talk to someone, write everything down instead....but don't re-read it afterwards.
- ✓ **Humour** – laughter is a great way to relieve stress.

Why is sleep so important



Sleep plays an important part in good health and wellbeing throughout your life. Ensuring that you get the right amount of high quality sleep at the right time can help protect your mental and physical health, quality of life and safety.



The way you feel while you're awake is partly dependent on what happens while you're sleeping. During sleep, your body is working to keep your brain and body healthy. In children and teens, sleep helps the body grow and develop.

Not getting enough sleep can harm you in an instant (such as a car crash), or it can harm you over time. For example, it can raise your risk of some long-term health problems. It can affect how well you think, react, work, learn and get along with others.



The benefits of a good nights sleep



1. Sleep boosts immunity

Your bed time can often be blamed if you find yourself catching the cold or flu on a regular basis. Prolonged lack of sleep can disrupt your immune system, making it harder for your body to fend off bugs.



2. Sleep can help you slim

Sleeping less can cause you to gain weight! Studies have shown that people who sleep less than seven hours a day are 30% more likely to be obese than those who get nine hours or more of sleep.



3. Sleep improves mental wellbeing

A single sleepless night can often make you irritable and moody the following day, therefore ongoing lack of sleep may lead to long-term mood disorders including anxiety and depression.



4. Sleep reduces the risk of diabetes

Various studies have suggested that individuals who usually get less than five hours of sleep a night are more likely to develop diabetes.



5. Sleep wards off heart disease

Not getting enough sleep over a long period of time often appears to be associated with increased heart rate, an increase in blood pressure and higher levels of certain chemicals linked with inflammation, which may put extra strain on your heart.



6. Sleep increases fertility

Lack of sleep can make it more difficult to conceive a baby. This affects both men and women.

Preventing Heart Disease And Stroke

Keeping healthy is the most important thing we can do to help prevent heart disease and stroke. No one wants to be ill but so often the choices we make every day can impact on our health.

This booklet has described the risk factors for cardiovascular disease. A risk factor is something that increases our chance of becoming ill, and the more of these risk factors we have in our lives, the higher our chance of ill health.

But if we maintain a healthy weight, eat healthily, are active, stop smoking and keep to the safe alcohol limits, we really are giving ourselves the best chance possible.

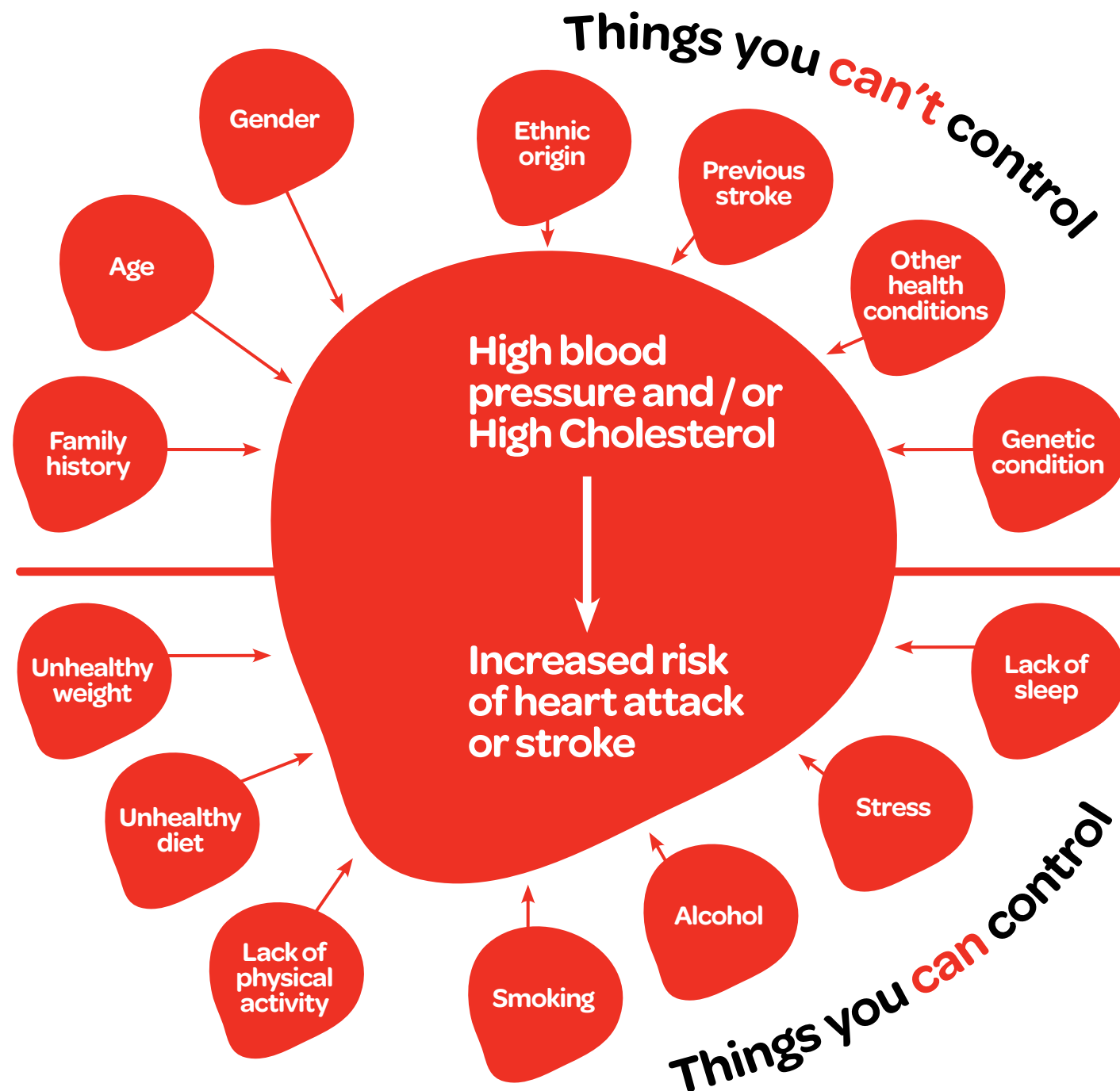
It is also important to pass these messages on to the next generation. Encourage your children to be healthy and make them aware of the risk factors. A healthy life is one of the most important gifts you can give them.

Help may be available from your GP or other organisations in making healthy changes.

And finally, remember that high blood pressure and high cholesterol are invisible, so it is important to get your health checked regularly.

Visit your GP or find out more at

www.nichs.org.uk/healthcheck



**If you want more information,
or want to tell us about the
changes you have made to
reduce your risk of having a
heart attack or stroke,
please contact us at:**

Belfast Office

21 Dublin Road
Belfast
BT2 7HB
Tel: 028 9032 0184

North West Office

32 Balliniska Road
Springtown Ind Estate
Derry/Londonderry
BT48 0LY
Tel: 028 7137 7222

Email: healthpromotion@nichs.org.uk

Website: www.nichs.org.uk/choosetobehealthy

Please note that the information in this booklet is not a substitute for the advice your doctors or other health care professionals may give you based on their knowledge of your condition.

Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke is a local charity which relies on the generosity of the people of Northern Ireland to carry out its work. If you would like to support us, please visit nichs.org.uk to make a donation. Thank-you.

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ON YOUR
SIDE**