



Coronary Heart Disease

How does your heart work?

Your heart is a muscular pump circulating blood to every part of your body. The heart has a left and right side and requires both blood and oxygen to work.

The right side of the heart collects blood low in oxygen from the body and pumps it to the lungs, where it picks up oxygen and releases carbon dioxide.

The left side of the heart then collects blood rich in oxygen coming from the lungs and pumps it to the body via the aorta and a series of arteries.

Heart Conditions

Coronary heart disease is the term that describes what happens when your heart's blood supply is reduced or blocked by a build-up of fatty substances in the coronary arteries.

Angina is the pain or discomfort upon exercise experienced when there is reduced blood flow to the heart muscle meaning it doesn't get as much oxygen as it needs, due to the build-up of fatty deposits (plaque) on the walls of the arteries. It is a common warning sign of coronary heart disease.

Heart attack occurs when an artery becomes blocked due to a build-up of plaque on the walls of the coronary arteries, which narrows them preventing blood flow. The plaque can also rupture and trigger the formation of a blood clot. As a result, the heart muscle is starved of oxygen and may be permanently damaged.

Signs and Symptoms

The symptoms of a heart attack vary from person to person but may be characterised by the acronym STOP:

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF A HEART ATTACK

S Something's not right - symptoms can start slowly

T Tightness or pain in the chest, pain in the neck, arm or jaw.

O Other symptoms like shortness of breath, nausea or sweating.

P Phone 999 immediately - the ambulance crew will do an ECG.

How can I prevent heart conditions?

Not all cases of heart conditions can be prevented but to reduce your risk you can make changes to your lifestyle. If you do have a heart condition, it is still important to follow a healthy lifestyle and consult your GP for advice.

1. Eat a balanced diet



2. Keep physically active



3. Maintain a healthy weight



4. Stop smoking



5. Moderate your alcohol intake



6. Manage your stress levels



7. Get enough sleep



As well as having a healthy lifestyle, you should also reduce your risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, atrial fibrillation (AF) and diabetes.

Further Support

Living with a chest, heart or stroke condition can be challenging, not just for the person affected but for the wider family and carers as well. Our Care Services team at NICHs offers a range of information, support and activities to help people live with their condition. These services are free and can enable people to feel more in control, improve their confidence and know where else to go to for help. For more information, please visit our website www.nichs.org.uk

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