

LIFESTYLE ADVICE SHEET

A healthy lifestyle will make your heart healthier. Here are 10 things you can do to improve yours.

Get moving

Do 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise* every week. One way to achieve this target is by doing 30 minutes of activity on five days a week. Fit them in where you can, such as cycling to work.

Give up smoking

Smoking is one of the main causes of coronary heart disease. A year after giving up, your risk of a heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker. NHS Stop Smoking Service can support you – self refer by calling 0800 0525 855 or text QUIT to 80800 or visit the QUIT Shop at 693 Bristol Road South, Northfield, Birmingham B31 2JT tel: 0121 476 7206.

Manage your weight

Being overweight can increase your risk of heart disease. Stick to a well-balanced diet low in fat and high in fruit and vegetables, combined with plenty of physical activity.

Drop the salt

To maintain a healthy blood pressure, stop using salt at the table and try adding less to your cooking, or cut it out completely. You'll soon get used to it. Also, watch out for high salt levels in processed foods. Check the food labels: a food is high in salt if it has more than 1.5g salt (or 0.6g sodium) per 100g.

Get your five a day

Eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Add dried fruit to breakfast cereal, and add vegetables to your pasta sauces, curries, etc.

Eat oily fish

Eat oily fish twice a week. Fish such as mackerel, sardines, fresh tuna and salmon are an excellent source of omega-3 fats, which can help to protect against heart disease.

Walk off stress

If you're feeling under pressure, clear your mind with a walk. It will help put your ideas in order and reduce tension. If it's a brisk walk, it will also count towards your daily activity.

Cut saturated fat

Small changes to your diet can have positive health benefits. Choose semi-skimmed over full-fat milk, leaner cuts of meat and steam or grill foods rather than frying.

Drink less

Alcohol can be fattening. For example: If you added three or four gin and tonics to your usual daily diet, you could put on nearly 2kg over four weeks.

Read the food label

When shopping, look at the label on food packets to see what the product contains. Understanding what is in food will help you make healthier choices.

If you feel you need further help, support and guidance we can refer you to our Health Trainer – please ask your GP or Practice Nurse.

Source: The British Heart Foundation

*Examples of moderate intensity aerobic exercise include: walking fast, water aerobics, riding a bike on level ground or with few hills, doubles tennis, pushing a lawn mower, hiking, skateboarding, rollerblading, basketball. Moderate-intensity aerobic activity means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break sweat.