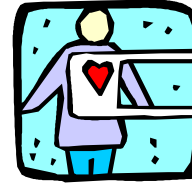


Preventing Heart Disease



Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) is the commonest cause of serious illness in the UK. For those people who suffer from CHD effective monitoring and treatment can prevent it getting worse.

What is CHD?

CHD is due to a narrowing of one or more of the blood vessels that take blood into the heart muscle. Most often this is caused by the arteries becoming 'furred up' with fat. This reduction of the supply of blood, and therefore oxygen, to the heart muscle causes a cramp like pain that is called angina. Total blockage of an artery leads to damage to part of the heart muscle. This is a heart attack or myocardial infarction.

How can heart disease be prevented?

The following 'risk factors' increase the risk of developing heart disease.

- A family history of heart disease
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- Lack of exercise
- Having diabetes
- Being male

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Some risks are more 'risky' than others. For example, taking no exercise is not as risky as smoking. Even a smoker who keeps fit is more at risk than a non-smoker who exercises. Also risk factors add up. To have two or three risk factors is of more concern than one risk factor alone.

However, nothing can change some risk factors, for example a strong family history of heart disease. Such people should make an extra effort to tackle preventable risk factors.

CHD Monitoring Clinic

Family History. Most people have a relative who has heart disease. However, the early onset of heart disease in a near relative is a risk factor.

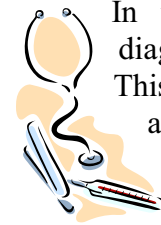
Smoking. This is one of the strongest risk factors. The chemicals in tobacco smoke are carried in the bloodstream and affect the blood vessels. Stopping smoking is the single most effective thing to do to reduce the chance of developing heart disease.

Diet, weight and cholesterol. If you are overweight, losing weight is advisable. Even if you are not overweight, a diet high in fat can lead to a build up of cholesterol.

Exercise. There are very few conditions where exercise is not advised. No matter how old or how sedentary it is never too late to start building up fitness. Any exercise is good but vigorous exercise such as jogging, swimming, aerobics, etc, at least 3 times a week for 30 minutes or more gives most benefit.

Diabetes. Having diabetes increases the risks of developing heart disease, so any preventable risks should be tackled.

Gender. Up to the menopause women have some protection against developing heart disease, but this disappears after the menopause.



In the CHD Clinic we monitor patients who have been diagnosed with Coronary Heart Disease.

This includes patients who suffer from angina, have had a heart attack or have had surgery for narrowing of the coronary arteries. We also would like to see people who have diabetes.

The Clinic is run by the Practice Nurses.

At each visit you will be asked about your diet, exercise level, smoking and alcohol intake.

The nurse will then check your weight (and possibly height), blood pressure and ask for a urine sample to test for sugar.

At regular intervals, but not at every visit, the nurse will take blood samples to check for cholesterol levels, diabetes and normal kidney function.

Clinic appointments are also opportunities to discuss any concerns you may have and to seek help and advice in reducing the risk factors associated with heart disease.

