

Risk factors for cardiovascular disease

Name: _____ Hospital no: _____

Cardiovascular disease is the narrowing of the arteries in the body, including the coronary arteries to the heart, known as coronary heart disease. The causes have not as yet been fully established, but several risk factors have been shown to contribute to the development of the disease. It is therefore important to identify what those risks are, and to be able to take steps to reduce them.

Risk factors fall into two categories: **non-modifiable** and **modifiable**.

Non-modifiable risk factors are factors that cannot be altered. It is important to be aware of them if they affect you. They include:

Age – risk of cardiovascular disease increases with age.

Family history – if a member of your immediate family developed early onset of cardiovascular disease (female relative less than 65 years old, male relative less than 55), you are at higher risk.

Ethnic origin – research suggests that people of African-Caribbean and South Asian origin living in the UK may have an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Gender – men have an increased risk of cardiovascular disease at a younger age whilst women may have some hormonal protection until the onset of the menopause.

Modifiable risk factors can be affected by changing our lifestyle or behaviour patterns, and through the administration of prescribed drugs. It is important to identify what your modifiable risk factors are so that you can take steps to reduce your risk.

Tips for making changes:

- Don't bite off more than you can chew – if you need to make more than one change, think about what the most important one is and make that one first.
- Think about it properly and plan carefully. If you don't succeed at first, try to think where it went wrong and then try again when you are ready.
- Think about how any changes will fit in with your daily routine and how it will affect other people – is it realistic?
- Tell others about your desire to make changes and ask for their support and encouragement – enlist a 'buddy' if it helps.

Modifiable risk factors	Targets	Comment
Smoking	Smoking damages artery walls and puts extra strain on the heart – the only safe number of cigarettes to smoke is none at all.	Smoking cessation referral Date:
Cholesterol	Cholesterol is a fatty substance which can contribute to the build-up of fatty deposits in the artery wall. Total cholesterol should be less than 4 mmols/L with LDL ('bad cholesterol') being less than 2 mmols/L. You can take steps to eat a diet that helps protect your cardiovascular system by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing saturated/trans fat intake • Eating 2-3 oily fish portions per week • Increasing fibre in diet • Aiming for 5 portions of fruit and veg per day. 	Next cholesterol check due: Cholesterol result: Date:
Obesity (BMI of 30 and above or central obesity)	Being the correct weight for your height is important and is calculated by your BMI (Body Mass Index) which should ideally be 20 -25. People who are 'apple' shaped (centrally obese) are at higher risk. Waist measurement should be less than 102cm for men (90cm for Asian men) and less than 88cm for women (80cm for Asian women). You can take steps to reduce your weight by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing calorie intake (reducing amounts of high fat/sugar foods and also portion sizes) • Increasing activity levels. 	BMI: Waist measurement:
Lack of physical activity/ exercise	The recommendation is 30 minutes of moderate activity 5 days a week e.g. a brisk walk, climbing stairs, cleaning windows, cycling. If you have not exercised for some time or have had a recent heart event, you will be advised to build up your exercise levels gradually. Cardiovascular rehabilitation can help to support you in becoming more active.	
High blood pressure/ hypertension	People with cardiovascular disease should aim for a blood pressure reading of less than 130/80mmHg. Steps to reduce your blood pressure include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing salt intake • Sticking to guidance on alcohol -not regularly drinking more than 14 units per week and spreading this evenly, with at least two alcohol free days per week • Aiming to maintain a healthy weight • Taking regular exercise. 	Blood pressure: Date:
Diabetes	Diabetics are at a higher risk of cardiovascular disease. This risk increases if your diabetes is not well controlled. Diabetics should aim to have a blood sugar between 4 and 7mmols/l before mealtimes. You should liaise with your GP/diabetic nurse to discuss long-term diabetes management.	
Stress	Stress can affect some of the above risk factors and so being aware of your own stress levels and how to manage stress is important. Relaxation, seeking support and exercise can all help.	