

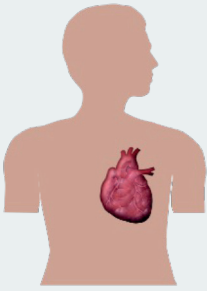


# Looking after your heart

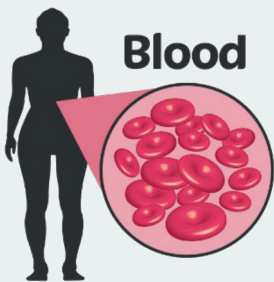
**An easy read guide**



## What does your heart do?



The heart is a big muscle that pumps blood around the body.



Blood carries oxygen and other important things to different parts of your body.

Without oxygen our bodies will not work properly.

## Why do I need to look after my heart?



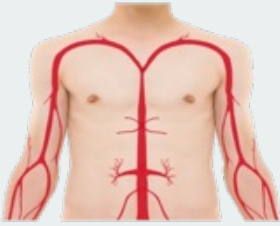
It is important that you keep your heart healthy so that it can do its job and keep you well.



If your heart is not healthy, you could have **cardiovascular disease**.

This is also called **heart disease**.

# What is heart disease?



There are tubes called **arteries and veins** that go into and out of your heart.

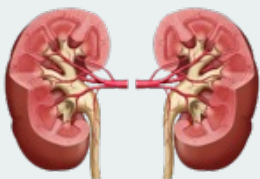
Your blood goes through the tubes and gets pumped around your body by your heart.



If you have heart disease bits of fat – called **deposits** – can get stuck in the tubes. This makes it hard for your heart to pump the blood around your body.



This can make your **blood pressure high** which can make you unwell.



High blood pressure can give you poor eyesight. It can make other parts of your body unhealthy, like your kidneys.



Sometimes the tubes that go in and out of your heart get blocked with deposits.

If this happens it can be very serious. It can cause a **heart attack or a stroke**.



It is really important to protect yourself from heart disease.

## Who is at risk of heart disease?



Anyone can get heart disease. You are more at risk of heart disease if you have:

- diabetes or high cholesterol



You also have more chance of having heart disease if you:

- smoke
- drink too much alcohol



Your risk of heart disease also goes up if you:

- eat an unhealthy diet
- weigh too much
- don't do enough exercise



- feel stressed a lot



- Afro-Caribbean and South Asian people are also more likely to have high blood pressure.

## How do you know if your heart is healthy?



You can tell how healthy your heart is by getting your blood pressure checked.

If your blood pressure is high, this means your heart might not be working well.

## Get your blood pressure checked



You can get a blood pressure check at a community pharmacy or your GP surgery.



You can also do this at home if you have a blood pressure monitor. Some people need support to do this. Tell your doctor your blood pressure results.



If your blood pressure is high, there are easy things you can do to make it better.

## What can you do to look after your heart?



There are lots of things you can do to keep your heart healthy. Small changes can make a big difference and keep you well.

## Eat a healthy diet



Try to eat **more** healthy foods like fruit, vegetables and whole grains.



Eat **less** fatty and sugary foods like sweets, crisps, junk food and fizzy drinks.

Eat **less** salt. Too much salt in your diet can make your blood pressure high.



Eat the **right amount**. It is important not to eat too much or too little.



You can get advice from your GP or wellbeing service about healthy eating or losing weight.

## Be active



Being active is good really for your health. This means doing things where you move your body.



This doesn't have to be sport. It can be things like walking or dancing, gardening or even cleaning.



Do something that makes your heart beat faster. It is good to be active for 20-30 minutes a day.





You can get information from your GP or wellbeing service about social prescribing services or groups or activities you could try.

## Stop smoking



Giving up smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health.

Your risk of heart disease goes down as soon as you give up smoking.



If you smoke, you can get help to give up. You can ask your doctor or at a pharmacy.

## Drink less alcohol



Drinking less alcohol is an important way to protect your heart and health.





You can ask your GP where to find about how much alcohol different drinks have in them.

## Manage your stress



Most people get stressed sometimes.

Being stressed can cause us to do things that are bad for our health like drinking and smoking.



Learning things that help you relax helps you to be less stressed.



You can help and information about stress and relaxation from your GP or wellbeing service.

# Have an annual health check



This is a health check at your GP surgery that you can have once a year if you have a learning disability and are over 14 years old.

**You don't need to be ill to have a health check.**



At your health check, a doctor or nurse will ask questions about your health. You can bring someone along with you for support.



They will do different health checks like a blood test and blood pressure check.



After your annual health check, you should receive a health action plan. This will record any health issues you have and the things you need to do to keep healthy.



If you don't have a learning disability there are other health checks available. You can speak to your GP about this.



People with a long-term health condition, like diabetes or asthma can also get an annual health check. Everyone over 40 years old can get a health check every five years.

## Local services:



To get help with healthy living and healthy blood pressure, you can contact your local health and wellbeing service:

**Brighton and Hove** - 01273 296 580  
[brighton-hove.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing](http://brighton-hove.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing)

**East Sussex** - 01323 404 600  
[oneyoueastsussex.org.uk](http://oneyoueastsussex.org.uk)

**West Sussex**  
[westsussexwellbeing.org.uk](http://westsussexwellbeing.org.uk)

- **Adur and Worthing** - 01903 221 450
- **Arun** - 01903 737 862
- **Chichester** - 01243 521 041
- **Crawley** - 01293 585 317
- **Horsham** - 01403 215 111
- **Mid-Sussex** - 01444 477 191

# For more information:

The Sussex Health and Care website has more information and short films for people with learning disabilities about looking after your heart:

<http://www.sussex.ics.nhs.uk/support-for-people-with-a-learning-disability>

**For more information about blood pressure checks:**

<https://www.bloodpressureuk.org/media/bpuk/docs/Keep-your-blood-pressure-healthy---Easy-Read.pdf>

**Annual health checks:**

Watch these films to find out how to get an annual health check:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/learning-disabilities/annual-health-checks/>

This is a film about how health actions plans are helping people to keep healthy and stay well:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocU8XhD1kh8>

**Asking for reasonable adjustments:**

‘Treat me well’ is a Mencap film about asking for reasonable adjustments in hospital:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMV06K1oanA>

This easy read guide was made in partnership with

**Brighton and Hove Speakout**, who offer independent advocacy for adults with learning disabilities in Brighton and Hove:

<http://www.bhspeakout.org.uk>



**Sussex**  
Health&Care

