



Helping yourself towards a healthy heart and circulation

LIFEBLOOD 
THE
Thrombosis
 CHARITY


H·E·A·R·T UK
THE CHOLESTEROL CHARITY

The link between Thrombosis, Heart Disease and Stroke

In our body there are blood vessels called veins and arteries carrying the food and oxygen needed to keep us alive. Arteries take blood from the heart to the various parts of the body and veins carry the blood back to the heart.

Within our blood there is a system known as the clotting mechanism that performs two vital, but opposite functions – the first to keep the blood flowing, with the second to form a 'plug' or clot to stop us from bleeding.

But sometimes this function can go wrong and the blood becomes a solid mess within a blood vessel causing what is known as a thrombosis or clot.

A blood clot in a vein is called a venous thrombosis. Examples of this are deep vein thrombosis or DVT, as it is more commonly known. When a clot occurs in arteries they are known as arterial thromboses and can lead to a heart attack, where an artery in the heart is blocked or a stroke, which is when a blood clot occurs in an artery in the brain.

Heart attacks and strokes are a major cause of death and serious illness in the UK.

Prevention of thrombosis, and therefore heart disease and strokes, can be aided by a healthy diet and lifestyle. Your risk is increased if you:

- ♥ Have high blood pressure
- ♥ Have raised cholesterol levels
- ♥ Have blood that is more likely to clot
- ♥ Smoke
- ♥ Are overweight
- ♥ Have diabetes
- ♥ Have a history of heart disease in your family.

But there are some simple things that you can do to help keep your heart and circulation healthy.

A healthy diet and lifestyle

Eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly is important to help maintain a healthy heart. And healthy eating doesn't have to be dull – there are many great tasting foods with proven heart and circulation health benefits.

A healthy diet is balanced, with a variety of different foods from each food group. It is:

- ♥ Low in saturated fat, salt and sugar – cut down or switch to healthier alternatives to fatty, salty and sugary foods
- ♥ High in fruit, vegetables and fibre – aim for at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day, and choose wholegrain foods where possible
- ♥ One which includes two portions of fish every week, including one oily fish, such as salmon, trout, sardines, mackerel or fresh tuna which contain omega-3 fatty acids that can help to protect your heart.
- ♥ Moderate in alcohol – men up to 21 units per week and women up to 14 units per week and do not save the units for a binge



A healthy diet can also include heart and circulation healthy foods that are specifically designed to reduce blood pressure, cholesterol and the 'stickiness' of the blood.

To help you identify heart and circulation healthy foods, look in your supermarket for healthy eating logos from reputable organisations.

Tip: Frozen vegetables are just as good for you as fresh vegetables and they can be quick to prepare, convenient and economical.

Tip: To benefit your heart and circulation, you need to do some form of activity that makes you out of breath for thirty minutes three times a week. Choose something that you enjoy and that suits your lifestyle and routine, and you'll be more likely to stick with it.

Exercise is important for heart health too: try to incorporate regular exercise into your routine. Those who have heart disease or feel they are at risk should consult their doctor before starting an exercise programme.

Tip: Walking could be the answer for you when it seems hard to fit any sort of exercise into your busy life. Studies show that exercising for 10 minutes three times a day is as beneficial as exercising for 30 minutes once-a-day – so even walking to and from the shops or getting off the bus one stop early can help your heart.

Reduce the 'stickiness' of your blood

A risk factor for thrombosis is the 'stickiness' of your blood. This is regulated, in part, by components in the blood called 'platelets'. Platelets play an important role as they help to create blood clots to prevent bleeding after injury; they also help wounds to heal. However, in some people, spontaneous clotting can take place inside blood vessels. This can cause a blockage that can lead to heart attacks and strokes. As we get older, we are more likely to have 'stickier' blood, with platelets that are more likely to spontaneously clump together. Drugs, such as aspirin, are sometimes used medically to reduce this spontaneous clotting.

Tip: To maintain a healthy blood flow and benefit circulation, it is important to try and reduce the 'stickiness' of your blood; a healthy diet and lifestyle is important in this.

There is now a 'cardio-health' chilled juice drink available in supermarkets that has been specially designed to reduce blood 'stickiness'. Drinking this as part of a healthy diet and lifestyle can help you maintain a healthy blood flow and benefit circulation. Such products work differently from cholesterol-lowering and blood pressure reducing foods; indeed they may complement each other, and can be combined as part of a healthy diet and lifestyle.

Lower raised cholesterol

Whilst we need a certain amount of cholesterol for good health, too much can cause problems – it can stick to the lining of your blood vessels and contribute towards the development of heart disease. The recommended target cholesterol level is under 5mmol/l. Yet, on average men in England have a level of 5.5mmol/l and women 5.6mmol/l.

Tip: Know your cholesterol level and eat a healthy diet to help keep it within the recommended range (your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist can measure your cholesterol and advise you if it is at a healthy level).

Keep your cholesterol at a healthy level by:

- ♥ Cutting down the total amount of fat you eat
- ♥ Reducing your intake of 'saturated' or hard fats (found in red meat and dairy produce)
- ♥ Reducing your intake of 'hydrogenated' fats (found in processed foods such as cakes and biscuits). These are often called 'partially hydrogenated' vegetable oil or 'hydrogenated' vegetable oil on food labels
- ♥ Using 'mono' and 'polyunsaturated' fats (found in foods, such as olive oil and sunflower oil).

In addition, foods containing plant sterols and stanols are available in the supermarket or health food shop. These can help to reduce cholesterol levels when eaten as part of a healthy diet.



Tip: Cut down your saturated fats; replace these with fats high in 'monounsaturates', found in olive oil and rapeseed oil, or fats high in 'polyunsaturates', found in sunflower oil, corn oil, soya oil.

Reduce high blood pressure

High blood pressure can damage your blood vessels and lead to heart disease. Many people with high blood pressure have no symptoms, so you can't assume that your blood pressure is normal if you haven't had it tested. In England more than a third of people (37% of men and 34% of women) have high blood pressure.

Tip: Know your blood pressure and take steps to keep it at a healthy level (your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist can measure your blood pressure and advise you if it is at a healthy level).

Keep your blood pressure healthy by:

- ♥ Reducing your salt intake
- ♥ Maintaining a healthy weight
- ♥ Taking regular exercise.



There are also foods now available from supermarkets and chemists that are designed to help keep blood pressure at a healthy level.

Tip: You should eat no more than 6g of salt a day, but it can be hard to keep track. It is often shown as 'sodium' on food labels. Think: 0.5g sodium or more per 100g is a lot of sodium; 0.1g sodium or less per 100g is a little sodium [Food Standards Agency].

Stop smoking

Smoking is a major cause of ill health and death in the UK. It contributes to many serious medical conditions such as lung cancer, asthma, emphysema and heart disease. The many chemicals contained in cigarette smoke have harmful effects and may damage your lungs, heart and circulation. For example, smokers experience damage to the linings of their blood vessels, and have 'stickier' blood than non-smokers, both of which can lead to inappropriate blood clotting inside the circulation and the beginnings of heart disease.

Tip: Stop smoking. It's never too late – the health benefits of quitting begin straight away and, after a while, your health risks become the same as those of a non-smoker.

Stopping isn't always easy, but there is now a lot of support available to help you stop. For example, call NHS Direct on 0800 169 0169.

Summary

Following a healthy diet and lifestyle can:

- ♥ Substantially reduce your risk of developing heart disease
- ♥ Increase the chances of survival after a heart attack
- ♥ Help you to maintain or reach a healthy weight (and so reduce the strain on your heart)
- ♥ Help to lower your blood cholesterol level
- ♥ Help keep your blood pressure down
- ♥ Help prevent blood clots from forming
- ♥ Help to lower your risk of a stroke.

Help yourself towards a healthy heart and circulation!



For your heart's sake

Key to symbols and notes

😊 Best choice

😐 Occasionally (2-3 items/week)

✗ Best avoided!

♥ Heart healthy and circulation benefiting foods and drinks

FH If you know you have **FH** (Familial Hypercholesterolaemia) you may be sensitive to the effects of foods high in cholesterol. You should limit your intake of these foods and seek individual dietary advice from a registered dietitian.

👉 Cooking styles: For less fat: steam, microwave, poach or boil, these methods need no fat or oil. If stir-frying, grilling use as little oil as possible (1 teaspoon per person) or use spray oil. Use non-stick pans.

🍷 Alcohol: Keep to sensible limits. Women: no more than 2 units daily (maximum 14 units per week). Men: no more than 3 units daily (maximum 21 units per week).



Bread, other cereals & potatoes

Aim to base all meals on a good sized serving from this group. Have bread or bread products as healthy snacks. People with a healthy heart tend to eat more wholegrain foods as part of a healthy lifestyle

- 😊 Wholegrain varieties of bread, chapatti without fat, pitta bread, flour tortillas, pasta, rice, Basmati rice, noodles. Wholegrain breakfast cereals. ♥ Oats. Couscous. Potatoes, sweet potatoes, yam, plantain. 👉
- 😐 Naan bread. Reduced fat oven chips (with less than 5% fat). Roast potatoes. 👉
- ✗ Garlic bread, croissant, waffles. Parathas, puris, samosas, pakoras. Pilau, biryani, fried rice. Sugar-coated breakfast cereals. Deep-fried chips.

Fruit & vegetables

Eat a wide variety and at least five portions in total everyday. A portion of fruit and vegetables is: 1 cereal bowl of mixed salad, 1 piece of fruit, e.g. 1 apple, 2 pieces of small fruit, e.g. 2 tangerines, 1 handful of grapes, strawberries, 1 heaped tablespoon dried fruit, 3 tablespoons vegetables or fresh fruit salad, 1 medium glass of fruit juice (150 ml) (can only count as 1 portion each day)

- 😊 Fresh, frozen, fruit & vegetables. 100% juice, dried fruit. Canned fruit in natural juice. Vegetables canned in water. Homemade vegetable based soups. 👉
- 😐 Canned fruit in syrup (drain the syrup). Reduced fat coleslaw.
- ✗ Coleslaw. Vegetables fried in batter, e.g. onion rings.



Meat, fish & alternatives

Eat a moderate amount (1-2 portions a day). Vary by choosing low fat meat, 2-3 times a week. On the other days choose fish or non-meat alternatives. Try to eat fish at least twice a week, inc. 1 portion of oily fish. A portion of fish (or meat) is an amount the size of a pack of playing cards. A portion of eggs is 2 eggs. A portion of nuts & seeds is 2 tablespoons. A portion of cooked beans, peas & lentils is four cooked tablespoons.



- 😊 Lean pork, ham, lamb, beef. Extra lean minced beef. Liver & kidney **FH**. Chicken & turkey without skin. Veal, venison, rabbit, game. 🍴-
- 😞 Lean bacon, low fat sausages, chicken breast in breadcrumbs, burgers, meatballs. Read the labels, find the lowest fat version. 🍴-
- ✗ Fatty cuts of meat: belly pork, breast of lamb, duck, goose. Frankfurters, streaky bacon, sausages, sausage rolls, pies, pasties, pork pies. Chicken nuggets & 'Kiev'.



- 😊 All fish: cod, plaice, sole, whiting, canned tuna & shellfish **FH**. Oily fish* (fresh & canned) mackerel, sardines, pilchards, salmon, trout, herrings, fresh tuna. 🍴-
*Oily fish are rich in omega-3 fatty acids which help your heart beat more regularly and prevent your blood from clotting. If you've had a heart attack or have heart disease, aim to eat 2-3 portions of oily fish every week. 1 portion = 100g of fish.

- 😞 Canned fish in oil (drain oil). Fried fish in batter (remove batter). Fish fingers, fish cakes.
- ✗ Fish in rich creamy or cheesy sauces. Hollandaise, lobster sauce, seafood cocktail sauce.
- 😊 3-4 eggs per week **FH**: boiled, scrambled, poached without fat. 🍴-
- 😞 Fried eggs & omelettes with minimal cooking fat. 🍴-
- ✗ Quiche. Scotch eggs.

- 😊 All nuts especially almonds, walnuts, linseed (flaxseed) pumpkin, sesame, sunflower seeds. Nut/seed butters.

- 😞 Reduced fat coconut milk.

- ✗ Coconut, coconut cream. Roasted nuts in oil & salt. Nut & seed butters with hydrogenated oils, palm oil.



- 😊 Baked beans, sweetcorn, kidney beans, chick peas, lentils, peas. Rinse if canned in salt/sugar.
 - ♥ Soya mince, soya beans, tofu. Quorn sausages/burgers etc.
- 😞 Vegetarian sausages. 🍴-

Milk/dairy foods & alternatives

Aim to have 2-3 portions a day in drinks or in meals/snacks. A portion is a medium glass of milk (200ml). A portion is a small pot of yogurt or light fromage frais (150g). A portion is a matchbox of medium fat cheese (40g) or 1/2 matchbox of high fat cheese (20g) or 2 small matchboxes of 'light' cheese spread (80g) or a large pot of cottage cheese (200g).

😊 Skimmed, semi-skimmed milk. ♥ Semi-skimmed milk with plant stanols/sterols.
♥ Soya milk (with added calcium & vitamins).

😊 Reduced fat evaporated milk.

✗ Full fat milk. Sheep's, goat's milk. Evaporated or condensed milk.

😊 Low fat natural, fruit & diet yogurts. ♥ Yogurts & mini-yogurt drinks with plant stanols/sterols. ♥ Soya yogurts.

😊 Greek half-fat yogurt, whole milk yogurt.

✗ Greek yogurt, thick & creamy yogurt.

😊 Low fat cheese: Cottage cheese, curd cheese, quark, ricotta, half-fat Edam, 'extra light' cheese spread.
♥ Cheese with wheatgerm oil (high in plant sterols).

😊 Medium fat cheese: half-fat cheddar, edam, brie, camembert, soft goat's cheese, mozzarella, feta, 'light' cheese spread, paneer.

✗ High fat cheese: cream cheese, mascarpone, stilton, cheddar type cheeses. Vegetarian cheddar, gouda, parmesan, full fat cheese spread, fried paneer.



Fatty & sugary foods

Try to eat in small amounts daily or as occasional treats. Use as little oil as possible, measure don't pour! Spray oil. 🍴-

😊 Low fat unsaturated fat spreads. ♥ Spreads with plant stanols/sterols.

😊 Spreads made from unsaturated oils.

✗ Butter, lard, suet, dripping, ghee, hard margarines, spreads with greater than 1% 'trans' fats (check label).

😊 Monounsaturated or polyunsaturated oils: olive, rapeseed, (most vegetable oil is made from rapeseed oil, check label) sunflower, soya, corn.

✗ Hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil (a source of 'trans' fats). Oils which have been reheated several times.

😊 Virtually fat free fromage frais.

😊 Half cream, half fat crème fraiche. Fromage frais.

✗ Clotted, double, whipping, soured, single cream. Crème fraiche.

☺ Use lemon juice, vinegar, herbs, yogurt etc. for salad dressings. Thicken sauces & gravy with flour. Use low salt stock.

☹ Low calorie salad creams & mayonnaise.

✗ Salad creams, mayonnaise. Rich sauces made with cream or roux.



☺ Plain biscuits. Tea cakes, crumpets, malt bread. Fruit salads, sorbet. Sugar-free jelly.

☹ Home-made cakes & puddings using best choice ingredients. Fruit-based puddings. Ice cream. Meringue.

✗ Cakes, pastries, pies, steamed puddings, trifle, doughnuts, cheesecake. Cream, chocolate biscuits, shortbread.

☺ Jams, honey, marmalade. Sweeteners.

☹ Boiled sweets, mints, fruit gums.

✗ Chocolate, fudge, toffees. Sugar. Indian sweets.



☺ Breadsticks, plain popcorn, unsalted nuts & seeds, dried fruit. Thin-based pizzas.

☹ Low fat crisps, reduced fat hummus.

✗ Crisps, cheese snacks. Bombay mix. Pizzas with too much cheese.

Flavourings

☺ Pepper, herbs, spices, lemon juice, garlic etc. Chutney & pickles made without oil.

☹ Reduced salt soy sauce.

✗ Salt, garlic salt, celery salt. Soy sauce. Oily pickles.



Drinks

☺ 1.5-2 litres of fluid per day. Tap, mineral, soda water, fruit juice, tea, coffee with low fat milks.
♥ Chilled 'cardio-health' juice drinks.

☹ Sugar free squash, diet fizzy drinks. Alcohol. 🍷

✗ Fruit squash, fizzy drinks.

Labelling

Ready meals & foods you eat in large amounts look at the amounts per serving. For snacks & foods you eat in small amounts, look at the 'per 100g' information.

☺ A little is: 3g of fat, 1g of saturates, 0.1g of sodium or 0.25g of salt

✗ A lot is: 20g of fat, 5g of saturates, 0.5g of sodium or 1.25g of salt

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