

# Preventing Heart attacks, Angina and Strokes

## Stopping another one

You may be reading this because you already have a problem with your blood vessels. For example: a heart attack; angina; a stroke; or narrow blood vessels to your legs. The advice below is important for you, but you may not manage to do everything described below. Choose what you can manage. I will try to help you to choose sensibly.

## Could you be at risk?

Or you might think that you could be prone to heart attacks, strokes or angina.

Go online and search for:

The Absolute CVD Risk/Benefit Calculator.

<http://chd.bestsciencemedicine.com/calc2.html>

Click on the second button to choose Qrisk2:

This is for British numbers. Put in all of your own numbers:

**QRISK<sup>®</sup>2-2014**  
Heart attacks + strokes

You will need your age, sex, ethnic origin, smoking status, do you have diabetes?, your top (systolic) blood pressure, whether you are on blood pressure medicine, your cholesterol number, your healthy (HDL) cholesterol number, whether your parents or siblings had a heart attack, or angina, before 60, if you have chronic kidney disease, atrial fibrillation of the heart, rheumatoid arthritis and also your height (in cm) and your weight (in kg).

**This computer programme will only work for you if you are 40 or above and don't already have obvious damage to your blood vessels (heart attack, angina, a stroke or narrow blood vessels to your legs). It does not work for those people who have familial hypercholesterolaemia (uncommon - 1 in 500 people).**

The computer programme should give you a risk number. This is the chance that you might have a heart attack, angina or a stroke in the next 10 years. This is shown with red and pink faces. If your number is higher than 20% then you should definitely discuss this with your GP. If the number is 10-19% you should probably talk to your nurse.

## Your choices:

Each of the following options are helpful for some people to protect their blood vessels and heart. To find out how helpful each option could be, for someone just like **YOU**, click on the option. It will tell you a relative benefit number, so that you can compare each option against the other options. The green smiley faces will show you the number of people like **YOU** who would gain benefit if you took that option for the next 10 years. For example if you clicked "physical activity" it might tell you that your relative benefit is 25%. So if your 10 year risk of having a heart attack stroke or angina is 20% in the next 10 years, taking regular physical activity will protect and save 5 people, like you, in a 100 from having these problems over the next 10 years. The smiley faces are easier to understand than the percentages (%).

### ○ Physical Activity 25% benefit



In a perfect world this means 150 minutes of activity per week. Aim to make yourself a little breathless, but not so breathless that you can't talk. Some people like to use activity apps that measure steps. Choose your own targets, with support. Start at 5000 steps but consider aiming for 10,000 steps in a day. Exercise should be fun (usually).

### ○ Mediterranean Diet 30% benefit



The Mediterranean diet wins hands down for protecting the heart. But you may prefer a diet that works for you to lose weight. Suitable alternative include the low GI diet (especially for those prone to type 2 diabetes) or the 5 and 2 diet (the Fast diet) - which might work for those who can be strict with their diet only twice a week. Diets have to be do-able in the long term. And enjoyable.

Each 7g of cereal fibre per day lowers your risk of death or heart attack by 9%. Aim for 25-38g of cereal fibre per day. Porridge is an ideal way to start the day. Choose whole grain breads, brown rice, bulgur wheat and graham (whole grain) flour.



### ○ BP medicine 30% benefit (if BP high)



There are options for your blood pressure that can bring your blood pressure down to your target blood pressure without taking tablets. But if despite swapping to low salt, losing weight, taking regular exercise and reducing your alcohol intake, your blood pressure stays high, your GP may recommend a blood pressure tablet or two.

If your blood pressure is high, and you reduce your blood pressure by 10, you will reduce your risk of having a heart attack, angina or a stroke by 20-30%.



23% of people with high blood pressure reduced their blood pressure by 10 by reducing their salt intake (and replacing it with healthy lo salt).

40% of people with high blood pressure reduced their blood pressure by 10 by changing to a healthier diet.

31% of people with high blood pressure reduced their blood pressure by 10 by taking regular exercise.

30% of people with high blood pressure reduced their blood pressure by 10 by reducing their alcohol intake.

Taking 30g of flaxseed daily reduces blood pressure by 15 on average.

Losing as little as 5kg (if you are overweight) can make a big difference to your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, arthritis, gallstones, sleep apnoea and colon and breast cancers. Sleep apnoea is a common cause of high blood pressure in people who are overweight.



○ **Low/mod intensity statins 25% benefit**

The Daily Mail may tell you one day that Statins are evil, and the next they may tell you that they are the best thing since sliced bread. Statins don't suit everyone. But most people can use low dose statins with very little risk of sore muscles or other problems.



○ **High intensity statins 35% benefit**

High intensity statins work a little bit better than low dose statins. But 1 in 10 people may get achy muscles, 1 in 150 people get a change in their liver blood tests, 1 in 10,000 people get severe muscle problems or kidney damage, 1 in 50 people may get cataracts earlier than expected. 1 in 170 people get diabetes earlier than expected. Most of these problems go away when you stop, or reduce the dose of, the statin.



○ **Metformin (diabetes only) 35% benefit**

If you have type 2 diabetes, taking metformin tablets can protect you from heart attacks and strokes. It can also make it easier for you to control your weight. But it can cause you to open you bowels slightly more, and should be started at a low dose with meals and slowly increased.



○ **Smoking Cessation eg 50% benefit**

If you smoke, the most effective way of protecting you from heart attacks or strokes is stopping smoking. We don't really know how safe vaping, e cigarettes, is. But it's almost certainly a hell of a lot safer than smoking. Come and see our smoking nurse  or get vaping :)

Please feel free to ask for a receptionist, nurse or doctor to fill in the boxes below so that you can calculate your own 10 year risk of heart attacks and strokes using the online risk calculator. Decide which lifestyle you want to choose to change. Your doctor or nurse will be happy to talk to you (eg on the phone) about what will work best for you. We can support you too.

Enter each of the following details:

age                      sex                      ethnic origin                      smoking status                      do you have diabetes?

your average top (systolic) blood pressure

whether you are on blood pressure medicine      Yes / No

your cholesterol number

your healthy (HDL) cholesterol number

whether your parents or siblings had a heart attack, or angina, before 60

if you have chronic kidney disease

if you have atrial fibrillation of the heart

if you have rheumatoid arthritis

your height (in cm)

your weight (in kg)