Your NHS Health Check results and action plan

After your NHS Health Check you'll be given your risk of developing a heart or circulation problem (such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes or kidney disease) over the next 10 years.

Your doctor may describe this as low, moderate or high. This means:

* low – you have less than a 10% chance of a heart or circulation problem in the next 10 years
* moderate – you have a 10-20% chance of a heart or circulation problem in the next 10 years
* high – you have more than a 20% chance of a heart or circulation problem in the next 10 years

Your risk rises with age, so the next time you have an NHS Health Check your risk score may be higher, even if your test results remain the same.

Your NHS Health Check results should also be broken down into:

* your body mass index [(BMI)](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-health-check/Pages/your-NHS-Health-Check-results-and-action-plan.aspx#BMI)
* your [blood pressure](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-health-check/Pages/your-NHS-Health-Check-results-and-action-plan.aspx#bloodpressure)
* your [cholesterol level](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-health-check/Pages/your-NHS-Health-Check-results-and-action-plan.aspx#cholesterol)
* your [alcohol use score](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-health-check/Pages/your-NHS-Health-Check-results-and-action-plan.aspx#alcohol)
* your [physical activity assessment result](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-health-check/Pages/your-NHS-Health-Check-results-and-action-plan.aspx#physical)
* your [diabetes risk assessment](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-health-check/Pages/your-NHS-Health-Check-results-and-action-plan.aspx#diabetes)

You'll then have the chance to discuss how to [improve your scores](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-health-check/Pages/your-NHS-Health-Check-results-and-action-plan.aspx#help).

Your heart age

Your NHS Health Check can also give you and your doctor a better understanding of the true age of your heart with a lifetime risk calculator.

http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Allergies/PublishingImages/1.teaser-blank.jpg

The calculator works out your lifetime risk and heart age using information such as your family history of heart disease and your lifestyle choices, including whether you smoke. Take the [Heart Age test](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-health-check/Pages/check-your-heart-age-tool.aspx) now.

There are some things about your risk that you can't change – like your age, ethnicity or family history. But the most important factors in your risk score – such as your BMI, cholesterol level and blood pressure – can be changed.

Your BMI score

People who have a BMI in the overweight or obese category are at greater risk of a range of serious health conditions, including heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers.

How can I reduce my BMI?

If your BMI is higher than the healthy range (anything over a BMI of 25, or 23 if you are from a south Asian background), your health professional may refer you to a weight management service that could help you to achieve a healthy weight, as well as looking at your diet and activity levels.

Underweight?

A BMI below 18.5 indicates that you may be underweight. This could be a sign that you're not eating a healthy and [balanced diet](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx) that contains enough energy for your needs. Or it may be a sign of a wide range of underlying health conditions.

You can use the [BMI healthy weight calculator](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/loseweight/Pages/BodyMassIndex.aspx) to keep track of your BMI as your weight changes and to get advice on the best ways to achieve a healthy weight.

Your blood pressure score

When your blood pressure is measured, the reading has a higher and a lower number:

* your systolic blood pressure – this is the higher number indicating the pressure when your heart pumps blood out
* your diastolic blood pressure – this is the lower number indicating the pressure when your heart rests

Normal blood pressure is between 90/60 and 140/90. If your result falls outside this range, the healthcare professional explaining your results will discuss this with you and what action to take.

[High blood pressure](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Blood-pressure-(high)/Pages/Introduction.aspx) is a problem because it increases the risk of serious health problems such as heart attack, stroke, type 2 diabetes and kidney disease. High blood pressure usually causes no symptoms, so it's possible to have high blood pressure without knowing it.

Having a single raised blood pressure reading does not necessarily mean you have high blood pressure. Blood pressure can go up and down throughout the day and in response to stress.

Low blood pressure?

[Low blood pressure](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Blood-pressure-(low)/Pages/Introduction.aspx) doesn't necessarily indicate a health problem and is typically only a problem when it's accompanied by symptoms such as dizziness or fainting, which may be signs of a health condition.

If you have a raised blood pressure reading at your NHS Health Check, you may be given a blood pressure monitor to take home. Use this to see whether your blood pressure level is high at different times of the day over several days, which could indicate a health problem.

How can I reduce my blood pressure?

Blood pressure can be brought down by making changes such as:

* [cutting down on salt](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/cut-down-salt.aspx) (to 6g a day) and caffeine
* losing weight and becoming more active
* reducing alcohol intake

If necessary, your doctor may prescribe you with blood pressure-lowering medicines, but they will usually want you to try to make changes to your lifestyle habits first before prescribing.

Your cholesterol result

Your cholesterol result is broken down into:

* Your total cholesterol. Healthy adults should have a total cholesterol of 5 or less.
* Your LDL cholesterol score (often called "bad cholesterol"). This is the type of cholesterol that blocks the arteries. Healthy adults should have an LDL cholesterol score of 3 or less.

Your healthcare professional may also calculate your cholesterol ratio. A ratio score of 4 or more may indicate heart or circulation problems.

Too much of the wrong sort of cholesterol in your blood can build up on the walls of your blood vessels, slowing or blocking the flow of blood to vital organs such as the heart or brain. This narrowing of the arteries [(atherosclerosis)](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/atherosclerosis/Pages/Introduction.aspx) can cause [heart attack](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Heart-attack/Pages/Symptoms.aspx), [stroke](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stroke/pages/introduction.aspx) and mini-stroke [(transient ischaemic attack – TIA)](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Transient-ischaemic-attack/Pages/Introduction.aspx). It also increases the chance of a harmful blood clot developing anywhere in your body.

How can I lower my cholesterol?

If your cholesterol test shows results outside the healthy range, your health professional will provide [advice to help lower your cholesterol through dietary changes](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Cholesterol/Pages/Prevention.aspx). They may also advise treatment with medicines known as [statins](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Cholesterol-lowering-medicines-statins/Pages/Introduction.aspx).

Your alcohol use score

You will be given a score about your alcohol use based on questions your healthcare professional asked you during your NHS Health Check. Each question has a score from 0 to 4 for the answers.

An alcohol use score of 7 if you are a woman and 8 if you are a man would indicate that you are drinking [an amount of alcohol that is likely to be harming your health](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Alcohol-misuse/Pages/Introduction.aspx). Your healthcare professional will be able to advise you on ways to track your drinking and to cut down on alcohol.

If you score 20 more, you may have an alcohol dependence disorder (alcoholism). Your healthcare professional should be able to refer you on for [specialist support for cutting down on alcohol](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholsupport.aspx).

Your physical activity score

As part of your NHS Health Check, your physical activity level will be measured and you will be given a score that is calculated using an internationally validated tool.

There is good evidence that taking part in moderate, or vigorous, physical activity every day can reduce your risk of over 20 different health conditions, from diabetes to dementia, as well as improve the management and reduce the risk of complications of many common conditions such as high blood pressure.

The Chief Medical Officer recommends that adults and older people take part in 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity every week, as well as regular muscle-strengthening exercise and reducing the amount of sedentary activity.

If you are interested in [increasing the amount of physical activity you do](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults.aspx), you will be offered help and support to gradually increase your activity.

Your diabetes risk assessment

Your health professional will take your blood pressure and BMI test results into account to assess whether you're at an increased risk of developing diabetes.

You may be invited for another test to check that you do not have diabetes if:

* your BMI is greater than 30 (27.5 or more for Asian people), or
* your blood pressure is high (at or above 140/90mmHg), or where the systolic blood pressure or diastolic blood pressure exceeds 140mmHG or 90mmHg respectively

Help to improve your results

Quitting smoking

If you smoke you should be offered support and advice as part of your NHS Health Check.

All areas have a free local [NHS Stop Smoking Service](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/smoking/Pages/NHS-stop-smoking-adviser.aspx), which can help you find your best way of stopping, providing the medication and support you need. You are up to four times more likely to quit if you use NHS support than if you go it alone.

To find your local service, call the NHS Smoking Helpline on 0300 123 1044, go to [Smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree), or ask your healthcare professional to refer you to your local service.

Improving your fitness

Doing the recommended 150 minutes of your choice of exercise a week – whether it's walking, dancing or swimming – will help to bring your weight and blood pressure down, as well as having many other benefits for your wellbeing.

NHS Choices has lots of resources to inspire you into [getting fit your way](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/Activelifestyle.aspx). Why not try the [NHS Couch to 5K running plan](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/c25k/Pages/couch-to-5k.aspx) or [Fitness Studio exercise classes](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/Pages/welcome-to-nhs-fitness-studio.aspx) today?

Losing weight

People with a high BMI are at greater risk of a range of serious health conditions, including heart disease, stroke and certain cancers.

If you want some help with losing weight, download our [free NHS weight loss plan](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/weight-loss-guide/Pages/losing-weight-getting-started.aspx) and start today.

Eating well

Eating a balanced diet, including vegetables, fruit, grains and some meat and dairy, will give you a great chance of minimising your risk of cardiovascular disease.

The [Eatwell Guide](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx) shows how much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet, while our [healthy recipes](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/healthy-recipes/Pages/Healthy-recipes.aspx) are quick and easy to make.

Restricting your salt intake to no more than 6g a day can help your blood pressure readings come down. Find out more in [Salt: the facts](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/salt.aspx).

When shopping for food, think about the food that you are buying and plan to stay within the recommended levels of calories, fats and salt. Learn more about how to make healthier food choices in [Food labels](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/food-labelling.aspx).

Cutting back on your drinking

To reduce your risk of harming your health, including keeping your blood pressure in check, men and women are advised not to drink more than [14 units](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/alcohol-units.aspx) a week.

Reducing your intake and having several alcohol-free days a week will improve your overall health. Find out more about [low-risk drinking](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx).

Technology to support your action plan

There is a range of online tools and technology you can use to help you act on your NHS Health Check results.

Get started on making healthy changes with these [health and fitness apps](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-health-check/Pages/tools-and-technology-that-can-help.aspx).

Taking prescription medicines

If your blood pressure was high, your healthcare professional may have offered you blood pressure-lowering medicines. Likewise, you may be prescribed cholesterol-lowering medicines.

These can have a very beneficial effect on your health, but you are likely to need to take them for a long time. Depending on your results, doctors will usually advise lifestyle changes to reduce your need for medication and lower your risk of side effects before prescribing these medicines, which are usually taken as tablets.

Blood pressure medicines

[Blood pressure-lowering medicines](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Blood-pressure-(high)/Pages/Treatment.aspx) can include:

* ACE inhibitors, which relax your blood vessels
* calcium channel blockers, which widen your arteries
* thiazide diuretics, which flush excess water and salt from the body
* [beta-blockers](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Beta-blockers/Pages/Introduction.aspx), which reduce both your heart rate and the force at which blood is pumped round your body

Cholesterol-lowering medicines

The most commonly prescribed cholesterol-lowering medicines are called statins.

[Statins](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Cholesterol-lowering-medicines-statins/Pages/Introduction.aspx) can be prescribed to help lower high cholesterol, whether it's caused by a lack of exercise or a diet high in fat.

They can also help people who have an inherited condition that causes high cholesterol in their blood (this is called familial hypercholesterolaemia).

Ask your pharmacist

Your [local pharmacist](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/pharmacy/Pages/Pharmacyhome.aspx) is a trained expert in medicines, and can provide information and advice about your medicines, how to take them and what to do if you have any side effects.

Reference: NHS Choices Live Well Website

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