BE ACTIVE FOR LIFE

Over 65? Keep your heart healthy with physical activity

FIGHT FOR EVERY HEARTBEAT
bhf.org.uk
Introduction

The British Heart Foundation is fighting for every heartbeat.
Throughout this booklet, aimed at people aged 65 and over, we explain how moving more often and being active can help you reduce your risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD), and why that is important.

Being active is good for your health. It can help prevent and manage a variety of conditions including CHD, stroke and Type 2 diabetes. It can also improve the way you look and feel.

If you're already active try our booklet Get active, stay active which will help you keep up and increase your activity levels.

You can enjoy the benefits of being more active whatever your age, size or physical condition. Changing a few of your daily habits can soon add up to a more active lifestyle. It's never too late to start.

Regular physical activity can help with many health problems. But if you have a health problem, check with your doctor about the amount and type of activity that's right for you.

If you have a heart condition or you are at a higher risk of developing CHD – for example because you have high blood pressure – you should read our booklet Physical activity and your heart (order code HIS1).

This guide does not replace the advice your health professionals may give you based on their knowledge of your condition.
What are the practical benefits of moving more often?

Moving more often every day can help you avoid a range of health conditions including coronary heart disease (CHD). If you have a condition already, it can help you manage it better. It can also improve the way you look and feel.

Being more active will help you maintain your independence as you get older. The more active you are, the bigger the benefits to your physical and mental health.

Brenda’s story

"I don’t drive and I try to walk everywhere. I have a little tip, which is to walk as if you’re late for an appointment. When you retire I think it’s all too easy to get into stroller mode!

I used to have a hectic lifestyle as a school bursar and I think the contact you get with other people through exercise is just as important to your wellbeing as the exercise itself. The two go together. I go to a weekly keep fit class, which I love. I walk there and back so I feel I have a whole morning dedicated to exercise. I just love the group; we have such good fun."
By being active, you may:

- have more energy
- feel less stressed or anxious
- lose weight
- get a healthier body shape and appearance
- find it easier to keep in touch with friends
- have higher levels of energy
- find it easier to learn and remember things
- sleep more easily
- have more confidence.
Being active can also help to prevent illness in the long term by reducing your risk of:

- CHD
- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- Some cancers (such as colon cancer).

Being active is helpful even if you already have a condition. It can help to manage and control:

- CHD (including angina)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Being overweight or obese
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol levels
- Joint and bone problems such as arthritis.
It has a positive effect on your bone and muscle health, reducing your risk of:

- osteoporosis
- osteoarthritis
- back pain.

Being active will also help you to keep in touch with your family and friends, keep up with your hobbies and stay active in your local community.

**Fast fact**

You may be worried about overdoing things and harming yourself.

Staying inactive puts you at a higher risk of getting CHD than gradually increasing your activity levels.

Turn to the next page to read more about CHD.
blood within the artery

fatty deposits building up in the lining of the walls

fatty deposits narrow the artery restricting blood flow to the heart
What is CHD?

CHD is the single most common cause of death for both men and women in the UK. It begins when your coronary arteries – the arteries that supply your heart muscle with oxygen-rich blood – become blocked or narrowed because of a build-up of fatty deposits.

In time, your arteries may become so narrow that they cannot deliver enough oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle. This can cause **angina**. Angina is an uncomfortable feeling, tightness or pain in your chest which may spread to your arms, neck, jaw, back or stomach.

Sometimes the fatty deposits can become unstable, and a piece may break away causing a blood clot to form. If this blood clot blocks your coronary artery, part of your heart muscle will be starved of oxygen-rich blood and may become permanently damaged. This is a **heart attack**.

**Heart attacks can kill.** If you think you or anyone else is having a heart attack, you should phone 999 for an ambulance immediately.

If you want to know more, read our booklets, *Heart attack* (HIS7) and *Angina* (HIS6). Go to [bhf.org.uk/publications](http://bhf.org.uk/publications) to read them online.