

## Cardiovascular Risk

Everyone has some risk of developing cardiovascular disease (CVD) such as angina, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, or kidney disease. The aim of the health check is to find those people who may be at high risk, and to help them lower their risk and hopefully even prevent them from getting these diseases.

Characteristics which increase your risk are called risk factors. Some of these, such as family history or increasing age cannot be altered, but many risk factors can be changed. These are:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Being overweight (as defined by your body mass index)
- High cholesterol
- Not taking much exercise

Your cardiovascular risk score takes into account your age, family history, and smoking status, as well as the measurements which were made during your health check.

### Reducing your cardiovascular risk

*Smoking.* If you smoke then stopping smoking will benefit your health. If you would like help or advice then please telephone the Oxfordshire Smoking Cessation service on 0800 1223790 or Text QUIT to 60777.

Email - [info@stopforlife.co.uk](mailto:info@stopforlife.co.uk)

Website – [www.stopforlifeoxon.org](http://www.stopforlifeoxon.org)

*Blood pressure.* If your blood pressure was greater than 140/90 when we checked it during your health check then we will initially ask you to monitor your blood pressure at home over a 7 day period, then submit these readings to us. Raised blood pressure increases your risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease. Reducing your weight and increasing the amount of exercise you take will help to lower your blood pressure.

*Cholesterol.* Cholesterol is a type of fat in your blood. We need some cholesterol but too much of it can contribute to clogging up your blood vessels. Much of our cholesterol comes from the fats eat in our diet. You can lower your cholesterol by eating a healthy balanced diet that is low in saturated fat. In some circumstances we also prescribe cholesterol lowering medication, Statins.

Further dietary information can be found at <http://patient.info/health/low-fat-diet-sheet>

*Body mass index (BMI).* This is a comparison of your weight to your height. If your BMI is greater than 25 then you are classified as overweight, and if it is greater than 30 then you are classified as obese. This is a risk factor for heart disease, strokes, high blood pressure, and diabetes. You can help by reducing your weight and eating a healthy diet, increasing the amount of exercise you take. If you drink too much alcohol then reducing your alcohol consumption will also help. The recommended limits is 14 units a week. Further information on alcohol is available at <http://patient.info/health/alcohol-and-sensible-drinking>

## **Risk score after your health check**

### **Low risk (<10%)**

Your risk of CVD in the next 10 years is less than one in ten. It is still worthwhile considering whether you can improve any of your risk factors as doing so will improve your health and help to protect you for the future.

### **Moderate risk (10-19%)**

Please book an appointment with your usual GP so that we can discuss if any further treatment is required. You should try to consider which of your risk factors you can reduce. Bear in mind that your score will increase further with age unless you can modify some of your risk factors.

### **High risk (20% or more)**

Please book an appointment with your usual GP. Your risk of CVD disease in the next 10 years is one in five, or more, which is considered to be high risk. We strongly recommend that you consider which risk factors you can improve. Lifestyle changes will improve your risk score and in these circumstances we may also need to consider prescribing medication for your cholesterol, or for your blood pressure if it is raised.

**Our nurses and healthcare assistant will be happy to help and advise you on ways to reduce your cardiovascular risk so feel free to make an appointment if you would like to discuss this further.**

## **Your NHS Health Check**

**February 2025**