

Cardiovascular disease: risk assessment and reduction, including lipid modification

Information for the public

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Cardiovascular disease: the care you should expect

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a general term for conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels. It includes heart disease (for example, angina and heart attacks) and strokes.

Around 7 million people in the UK have CVD. It is more common in older people, people with diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure, and people who smoke.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with, or at risk of getting, CVD by making sure:

- if you do not have CVD and are between 25 and 84, you get an assessment to find out your risk of CVD
- your healthcare professional clearly explains the results of any risk assessment
- you are offered information and advice on lifestyle changes and taking statins and/or other cholesterol-lowering medicines to reduce your risk of CVD, if appropriate
- you receive appropriate tests and follow-up.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any treatment or care?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to the treatment or care that worry you more than others?
- How will the treatment affect your day-to-day life?
- What happens if you don't want to have treatment?

Statins are medicines that lower the level of bad cholesterol (non-high-density lipoprotein [HDL] cholesterol, which is mainly composed of low-density lipoprotein [LDL] cholesterol) in your blood. This makes it less likely you will get heart disease or have a stroke because bad cholesterol can build up in the blood vessels and lead to reduced blood flow or blockages.

We have written a [decision aid](#) that explains the advantages and disadvantages of taking a statin for people who do not already have heart disease and have not had a stroke. You can use it to help you to talk about your options with your healthcare professional.

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about cardiovascular disease.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [British Heart Foundation](#), 0300 330 3311
- [HEART UK – The Cholesterol Charity](#), 0345 450 5988
- [Stroke Association](#), 0303 3033 100
- [South Asian Health Foundation](#) (SAHF)

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by CVD and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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