

Reducing your risk of heart
and circulatory diseases



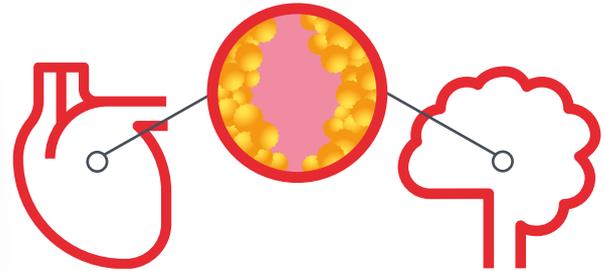
FOR PEOPLE OF
**AFRICAN AND
AFRICAN CARIBBEAN**
ORIGIN IN THE UK



Risk of heart and circulatory diseases

If you're of African or African Caribbean origin, you're at higher risk of developing some heart and circulatory diseases than other ethnic groups in the UK. This leaflet can help you find out how to reduce your risk.

Heart and circulatory diseases can develop when fatty material builds up in your arteries (the blood vessels that carry oxygen rich blood to your organs). If the arteries carrying blood to your heart get damaged and clogged, it can lead to a heart attack. If this happens in the arteries that carry blood to your brain it can lead to a stroke.



Artery in the heart
getting blocked

Artery in the brain
getting blocked

Why do I have a higher risk?

If you're from an African or African Caribbean background you're at higher risk of developing high blood pressure and having a stroke than other ethnic groups in the UK. You also have a greater chance of developing Type 2 diabetes, which increases your risk of heart attack and stroke.

There isn't a clear answer to why you're at increased risk. Genetics may play a part, but your lifestyle choices can play a big role too.

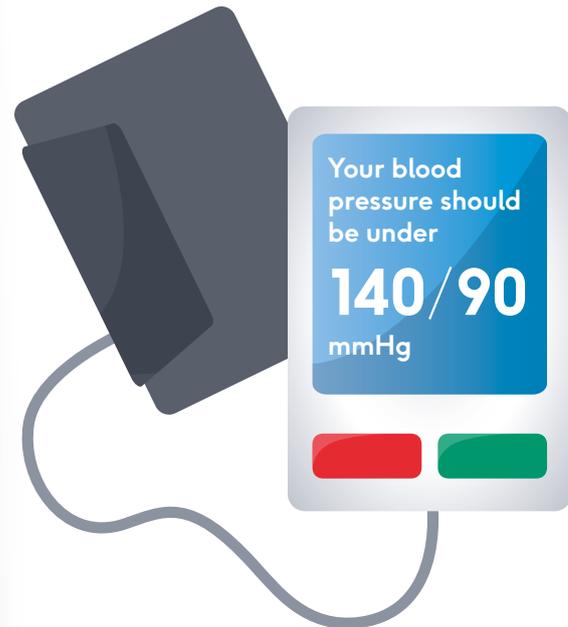
Making healthy changes such as quitting smoking, eating better and being more active can reduce your risk.



High blood pressure

Having high blood pressure increases your risk of heart attack and stroke, so knowing your blood pressure is important.

More than 1 in 4 adults in the UK have high blood pressure, and many will not know they have it.



You can get your blood pressure checked at:

- GP surgeries
- some pharmacies
- some workplaces
- an NHS health check (England only)

If you have high blood pressure, you can reduce it by being more active, drinking less alcohol, and reducing how much salt you eat.

Keep an eye on your blood pressure numbers. Always make sure you take any blood pressure medications as prescribed by your doctor.

Your weight

Being overweight increases your chances of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes.

BMI (Body Mass Index) is a measurement that tells you if you're carrying too much weight and are at increased risk of these health conditions.

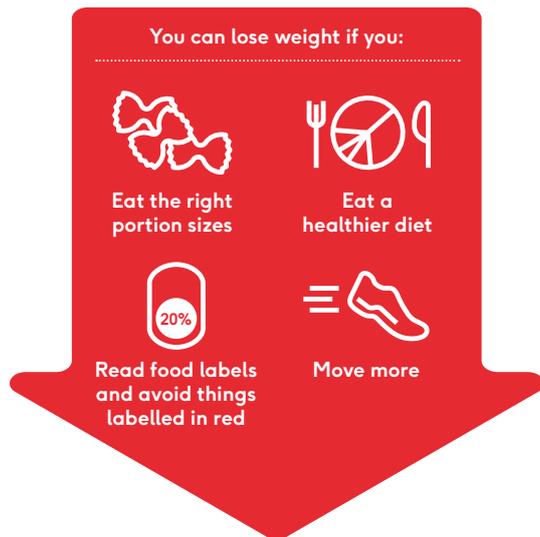
If you're of African or African Caribbean origin, you're more likely to be overweight than other ethnic groups in the UK. The BMI measurement is set to a lower threshold for someone from an African or African Caribbean background because you're at higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes than a white European in the UK.

| | BMI (kg/m ²) | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | White European | African / African Caribbean |
| Underweight | Less than 18.5 | Less than 18.5 |
| Healthy weight | 18.5 – 24.9 | 18.5 – 23 |
| Overweight | 25 – 29.9 | 23.1 – 27.4 |
| Obese | 30 or higher | 27.5 or higher |

Keep your weight healthy

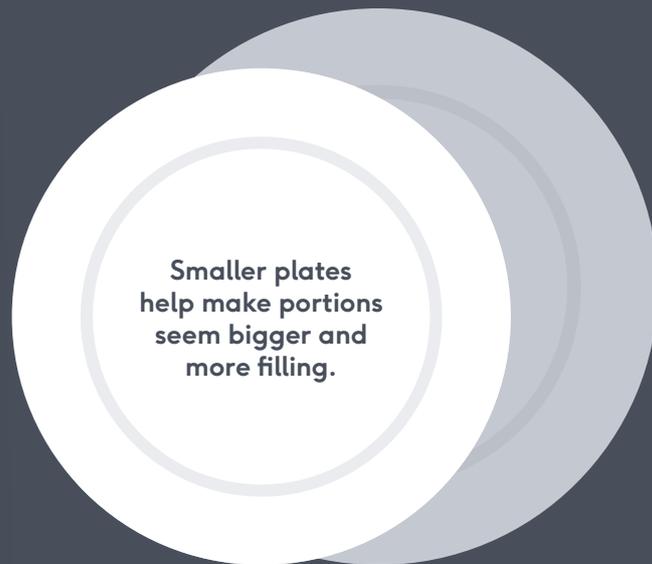
No matter what your ethnicity, maintaining a healthy weight is important for your heart health.

To lose weight, you need to eat better and move more. Start with small changes – as they add up, you could see some big results.



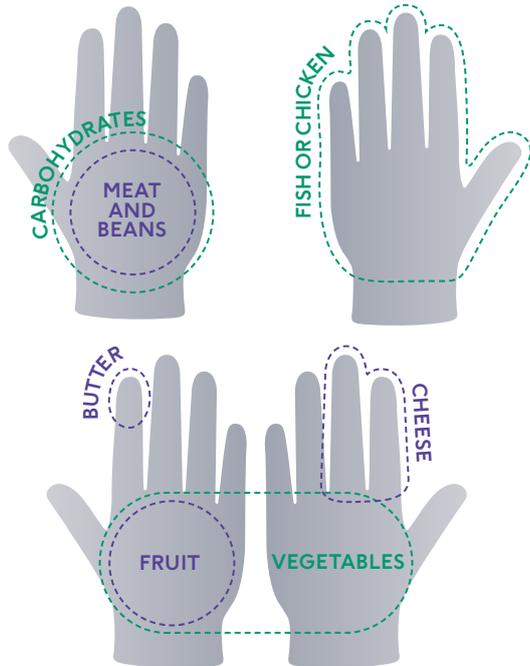
Get portion sizes right

It's important to eat the right amount of food. If you're eating too much then you're likely to gain weight, even if you're eating healthier foods.



What does one portion look like?

Using your hands is an easy way to measure food portions.



Eat a healthier diet

Eating a healthy diet will help you to control your weight, blood glucose, cholesterol and blood pressure.

Many staple foods in the traditional Caribbean and African diets are good for your health, like leafy green vegetables, sweet potatoes, yams, and beans. But some traditional dishes such as saltfish and ackee, jerk chicken or palm oil based soups, can be high in salt, sugar and saturated fat.

Here are some healthy swaps you could make today:



Butter, palm oil,
coconut oil



Olive oil, rapeseed
oil, sunflower oil



Sugary snacks



Fresh fruit and
unsalted nuts



Salt



Herbs, spices, ginger, chili, and citrus juice



Salt fish, salt pork, bacon



Fresh fish and lean meat



Fried jerk chicken



Grilled or baked jerk chicken



Fried fruit fritter



Grilled fresh fruit

Look at food labels

Always read the label on packaged food. Try to eat mostly **greens** and **ambers**. The label should have guidance on portion size too.

| | FAT | SUGARS | SATURATES | SALTS |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| LOW Healthier choice | 3g or less | 5g or less | 1.5g or less | 0.3g or less |
| MED OK most of the time | 3.1g to 17.5g | 5.1g to 22.5g | 1.6g to 5g | 0.3g to 1.5g |
| HIGH Just occasionally | More than 17.5g | More than 22.5g | More than 5g | More than 1.5g |

All measures per 100g



Move more

Being active helps you maintain a healthy weight and reduces your risk of Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

You don't have to go to a gym. It's about moving more in your day-to-day life.

Every time you are active, aim for 10 minutes or more. The right sort of activity will increase your heart rate, make you breathe harder and feel warmer.

Try to do at least 30 minutes of exercise a day, 5 days a week. This can be broken down into smaller chunks if you need to.



All these activities will help to improve your health:



Walking



Gardening



Taking the stairs instead of the lift



Housework like vacuuming



Dancing



Cycling

Check your health

If you live in England, are registered with a GP, and are aged 40–74, you'll be invited to go for a free NHS Health Check where you can find out your risk of developing heart and circulatory diseases. The practice nurse will check your blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol levels, as well as measure your weight, waist size, ask about your family history and assess your overall health.



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Heart transplants. Clot busting drugs. Pacemakers. Breakthroughs born from visionary medical research. Research you fund with your donations.

Heart and circulatory diseases kill 1 in 4 people in the UK. They cause heartbreak on every street. But if research can invent machines to restart hearts, fix arteries in newborn babies, build tiny devices to correct heartbeats, and give someone a heart they weren't born with – imagine what's next.

We fund research into all heart and circulatory diseases and their risk factors. Heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, vascular dementia, diabetes and many more. All connected, all under our microscope. Our research is the promise of future prevention, cures and treatments.

The promise to protect the people we love.
Our children. Our parents. Our brothers.
Our sisters. Our grandparents. Our closest friends.

You and the British Heart Foundation.
Together, we will beat heartbreak forever.

Beat heartbreak forever.

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