

Heart Disease

This leaflet is about reducing your risk of coronary heart disease. This is the cause angina and heart attacks. The leaflet is not about heart failure or irregular heartbeats.

It is surprisingly easy to quickly reduce your risk of heart disease.

WHAT TO AVOID:

Most Important:

SEED OILS: (avoid cooking with supermarket oils such as safflower and sunflower oil or using margarines. Seed oils are also found in nearly all processed foods). Seed oils are a major cause of heart disease.

SUGAR: (hidden in many foods, look at labels - will give sugar per 100g - remember one teaspoonful of sugar is 4g). **The most important underlying cause of heart disease is metabolic syndrome** caused by too much sugar and refined carbohydrates (see separate leaflet). **The amount of calories from sugar in the diet predicts the risk of a heart attack.**

FIZZY DRINKS: One or two fizzy drinks daily can increase risk of heart attack by 50%. Surprisingly diet drinks increase the risk almost as much as sugary drinks.

SMOKING: These days fewer people smoke and nearly everyone knows the dangers.

SOME DRUGS:

Proton pump inhibitors such as PPI, such as omeprazole and lansoprazole, have been noted to increase the risk of heart events in a number of studies. A meta-analysis of 23 studies in 2012 found an **increase of 28%**¹ and a 2014 study found a **58% increase**². More worryingly, a smaller 2021 study found a 200% increase³. These drugs block nitric oxide which blood vessels need to dilate. This puts people at high risk if they should have a heart attack are **people taking PPIs are twice as likely to die**⁴.

Anti-depressants: A study by Dr Bansal from Bristol University on men and women who took long-term anti-depressants found those who took an **SSRI anti-depressant** for 10 years had a **87% greater risk of developing heart disease** and a 73% higher risk of dying from heart disease. For those using **non-SSRI antidepressants** the risk was **99%**

greater risk of developing coronary heart disease with an 86% higher risk of dying from heart disease.

Moderately Important:

MILK (skimming makes it more dangerous as skimmed milk contains more milk sugar (lactose). Don't use milk on cereals and ideally avoid cereals completely as they are usually high in sugar.

COPPER DEFICIENCY see leaflets on Copper and Food, Lifestyle and the Heart.

Less Important:

MEAT: Minor association, especially with processed meat.

WHAT TO INCREASE:

WATER: Two important studies show that drinking 5-6 glasses daily reduced the risk by 50 - 70% (compared to 2 glasses daily).

NUTS: A handful of nuts daily reduce risk by 50%.

OILY FISH: Eating three times a week reduces risk by 30%.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES: A serving of greens reduces the risk by 20%, other studies show each 25 grams of fruit reduces the risk by 9%.

MEDITERRANEAN DIET: reduces risk of heart disease by 70%.

EXERCISE: regular exercise reduces risk between 30-50%.

SUNLIGHT: doubling exposure reduces risk by 50%.

For more detailed information see leaflet: Food, Lifestyle and the Heart

1) *Int J Cardiology, 2012,167(3):965-74*

2) *In J Cardiol, 2015; 177(1): 292-7*

3) *Mayo Clinic Proc, 2021 96(10): 2540-49*

4) *Plos One, 2015 doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0124653*