



British Heart  
Foundation

PROMOTING HEART HEALTH  
– YOUR WORKPLACE EVENT

# MISSION VERY POSSIBLE



FIGHT  
FOR EVERY  
HEARTBEAT

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# INTRODUCTION

01

Welcome to the Health at Work heart health event guide, which tells you all you need to know to put on your very own heart health awareness event in your workplace.

Health promotion events are a great way to reach lots of people relatively easily and help them to make more informed choices to improve their health and wellbeing.

Your event could involve setting up some information stalls in reception or the staff canteen; it could be a day of interactive activities, health checks and talks in a hall or dedicated space. It's up to you, and this guide aims to give you some ideas and inspiration.

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) often gets requests to attend such events, and while we do so when we can, it isn't always possible. That's why we've created this event guide with all the information you need to pass on messages to your colleagues about how to keep their hearts healthy.

Inside you will find information on:

- Key messages on heart health.
- How to plan and run a successful heart health awareness event.
- Resources and signposting to specialist information and advice.

- Interactive activities to engage staff.
- Common health questions you are likely to be asked.
- Suggestions of more things you can do to support a healthier workforce.

This guide contains a range of suggested activities and resources (see pages 6–11) for you to use at your event, but remember, these are just suggestions and you can tailor your event in any way you want.

Feel free to pick and choose the activities and resources that best fit your workplace.

To make it easier for you to plan your event, we have provided a list of resources by topic. We've also included information on what you'll need and how much time each activity takes.

All of the activities and resources listed in this pack are available from our orderline on 0870 600 6566 or download from our website, [bhf.org.uk/publications](http://bhf.org.uk/publications)

**If you have any  
questions, please feel  
free to contact us at  
[healthatwork@bhf.org.uk](mailto:healthatwork@bhf.org.uk)  
or telephone 0300 330 3311.**

“

## I achieved my mission

I used to worry about the health of my colleagues. Stress was an issue I was keen to tackle.

In March 2013 we ran an awareness day to support staff to make healthier lifestyle choices. It was a real success and more than 250 employees came along for free information and health checks.

It took a lot of planning and promotion, but it was definitely worth it. The feedback has been great and it's really rewarding to know that it's raised awareness and motivated people to take responsibility for their health."

**Theresa Dent-Gater,**  
Health and Wellbeing  
Coordinator at  
Croydon Council

# KEY HEART HEALTH MESSAGES

We don't expect you to be an expert on heart health, but it helps to know some of the key messages around heart disease in case you are asked any questions at your event. We've listed the main points below and the pages that follow list specific publications and sources of expert advice, such as our Heart Helpline, that you can share with colleagues attending your event.

### Why does heart health promotion matter?

Cardiovascular disease refers to all the diseases of the heart and circulation and includes coronary heart disease (the main cause of angina and heart attack), and stroke, as well as heart valve disease and heart conditions people are born with.

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the single biggest killer in the UK. CHD happens when the arteries that supply the heart with oxygen-rich blood become narrowed by a gradual build-up of fatty material.

It affects both men and women and is affected by risk factors such as:

- Smoking.
- Being overweight, especially if this weight is around your middle (waist).
- Physical inactivity.
- High blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Already having diabetes.
- Excessive alcohol intake.

The good news is we can make adjustments to our lifestyles that reduce our risk of developing CHD. That's what this pack is here to help with.

There are other risk factors too, such as family history, gender, ethnicity and age, but these are things that we can't change. However, making the effort to focus on the things that we can change should result in us feeling healthier and better about ourselves.

**Why not photocopy, cut out and distribute our top tips at your heart health event? (page 12)**

So you've taken the first step and decided to hold a heart health event. Now here are a few pointers to help you prepare the next steps.

- Have you asked senior management for their support? Employees are much more likely to take part if they know that there is backing from managers who will encourage them to attend.
- It also helps to motivate staff by involving them from the outset and asking them what they would like to see included at the event. Get a small team together to help you plan your event.
- Give staff plenty of notice so that they can make time to attend the event – you could send out emails, post a message on the intranet or put up posters in the canteen, staff room or even on the back of toilet doors.
- Decide if you want to run a drop-in event or if you prefer for people to sign up to specific timeslots and make this clear when advertising the event.

- You might want to order resources from other charities to give messages about other health conditions, such as diabetes, or invite health technicians to help with blood pressure and cholesterol screening. Here are some ideas of other organisations you could contact to find out more about services available in your area:

#### **Alcohol Concern**

- [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

#### **Change4life**

- [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)

#### **Stroke Association**

- [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)

#### **No Smoking Day**

- [www.nosmokingday.org.uk](http://www.nosmokingday.org.uk)

#### **National Smokers Helpline**

- (0800 169 0169)
- [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk)

#### **In your area**

- Your local GP surgery.
- Local pharmacies who may offer health checks.

#### **Event planning checklist**

When	What	✓
4–6 months to go	Get some support – do a staff survey and speak to management	
4–6 months to go	Gather a group of staff to help plan the event	
4 months to go	Set a date – look into any national events going on, such as walking or cycling month, to help you plan ways to promote heart health	
2–3 months to go	Decide on what topics to include and invite the relevant organisations	
2 months to go	Allocate staff to run the event/stall and familiarise yourself with the key messages you want to convey (see page 3 and FAQ on page 14)	
2 months to go	Start promoting the event to staff – use our posters	
2–3 weeks to go	Order resources and activities from the BHF website (see pages 6–11)	
2–3 weeks to go	Send out a reminder to staff to save the date	
The day itself	Engage staff with a variety of interactive activities, resources and our top tips	
The day itself/the next day	Evaluate your event by handing out a simple feedback form or emailing an online survey to colleagues	
After the event	Use our Next Steps section (page 18) to plan other activities, events and challenges to get staff engaged in health and wellbeing	
After the event	Keep staff involved – send out follow-up information reminding staff where they can get a health check or find out more	

# RESOURCES AND SIGNPOSTING

To make it easy to plan your event, we have suggested some resources to order, listed by topic. Those marked with an asterisk (\*) are some of our most popular resources. We do not recommend that you order all the resources on the list, but select a few from each section.

You can order these resources in the following ways:

- Call the BHF orderline on **0870 600 6566**
- Email **orderline@bhf.org.uk**
- Visit **bhf.org.uk/publications**

Most of our booklets can also be downloaded from our website.

Our resources are free but as a charity we rely on the generosity of people like you to fund our vital work. You can find out more about ways to support us, through donating, volunteering or participating in our events, at **bhf.org.uk/youcanhelp** or calling **020 7554 0000**.

We have suggested approximate quantities of each resource based on our own experience of running events. The suggested quantities are based on 50 attendees.

As a general rule of thumb, we recommend ordering 30–50% of the number of expected delegates for the most popular resources (marked with \*) and 20–25% of expected delegates for the other resources. Please note some of our resources have set limits on the maximum number that can be ordered (usually 50). If you require a larger order, please email **healthatwork@bhf.org.uk**

If you do order more resources than you need, you might like to return them to us to use again. Please note this is not a freepost address.

Unused resources may be returned to:

**BHF returns**  
**Prolog, Coniston House**  
**Sherwood Business Park**  
**Annesley**  
**Nottinghamshire**  
**NG15 0DJ**

Code	Title	Quantity
<b>Planning your event</b>		
G5/0513	Take heart – publications catalogue	1
HAW1b/ HAW1d/ HAW1f	Health at Work interactive posters – to promote your event (you can order printed copies using codes G566C and G566D)	Download PDF
M17 0309	How your heart works poster	1
<b>Support, advice and individual challenges</b>		
HM11	Heart Matters mini magazine – members magazine with advice from the experts	15
M54	Heart Helpline fridge magnet – to contact our nurse-led helpline	20
G566A	Pocket Missions booklet – for staff to set their own heart health challenges and chart their progress	20
<b>Physical activity</b>		
G12/0212	Get active, stay active*	20
G26	Put your heart into walking	10
HIS1	Physical activity and your heart – for people with a heart condition, high blood pressure or high cholesterol	10
<b>Stress and lifestyle habits</b>		
G187	Coping with stress*	20
G118	Stop smoking	15
<b>Managing blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes</b>		
HIS7	Heart attack*	20
HIS22/0310	Diabetes and your heart*	20
HIS04/1108	Blood pressure*	20
HIS03/0711	Reducing your blood cholesterol*	20
<b>Heart disease and heart attack</b>		
G499/0211	Heart attack? Know these symptoms	10
M37/0212	Women and heart disease	15
HIS25/0112	Keep your heart healthy*	20
G204D	Beating heart disease	10

**To add an interactive element to your event and to attract people to visit your stand, you can choose from our activities, which you can order or download from our publications page or play online.**

**These are ideas to inspire you and you can pick as many or as few as you like, or adapt them for your workplace.**

**Higher or lower food card game and food card facts booklet (order code G453C, G453G & Z54)**

5–10 minutes per round

Using our packs of food cards, this simple game highlights key food groups and improves understanding of the fat, salt and sugar content of everyday foods.

Select eight cards. You will need a table on which you can lay out the cards in a line. Participants place the cards in order starting with the item they think has the highest amount of salt, saturated fat, fat and sugar. Once they have done this, they can turn the cards over and read the information to see if they were correct. Use the downloadable booklet to help check the answers.

This game is suitable for individuals or small groups of no more than five people. Repeat with different cards from the pack as many times as you like. Each pack contains 56 cards covering a wide range of foods.



**Play your foods right game and instructions (order code G679 & G679a)**

5–10 minutes per round

This is a quick, simple and fun game to get people thinking about the levels of salt, fat, saturated fat and sugar in their food.

You will need a table on which to place the stand-up chart, with enough space for participants to gather round to play the game. They are given 12 magnetic food cards (3 cards per category) which they must then place on the chart from highest to lowest according to their salt, fat, saturated fat and sugar content.

Use the downloadable instructions to check their answers.

This game can be played individually or in small groups.

**Resistance exercise band and instruction sheet**

5 minutes

Using a resistance band (please note BHF cannot supply these), you (or a willing volunteer!) can demonstrate simple exercises that can be done at the desk, at lunchtime or at home to contribute to doing 150 minutes of exercise a week. We provide a simple instruction sheet that demonstrates the exercises (order code G546).

**Pledge cards (download code Z00)**

1 minute

Encourage staff to think about what they want to do to improve their heart health, for example, losing weight or quitting smoking. They write this down on a pledge card (which you can download from our website) and post it on a display wall or board as the first step in their commitment to making this change. This creates an interesting visual element to the day and can be added to after the event too.

The wellbeing event co-ordinator can then use this in a variety of ways:

1. To understand which issues are 'hot topics' for their colleagues, and then implement an appropriate workplace challenge (see page 18) or support (such as smoking cessation support).
2. To create a 'buddy system' for staff who have identified similar needs (for example, a weight loss club).
3. To evaluate the impact of health and wellbeing initiatives by following up with staff 6–12 months later to find out if they have been successful in acting on their pledge, and how the workplace has supported them in doing so.

Please note, that options 2 and 3 above require staff to supply their name and consent to being matched to other members of staff or contacted for follow up. Option 1 can be anonymous.

## Online games and videos

Up to 5 minutes each

Using a laptop, encourage staff to use our free online games and calculators, which are suitable for up to two people at a time. The videos can be played to larger audiences on a screen.

## Food labelling quiz

[bhf.org.uk/foodlabelling](http://bhf.org.uk/foodlabelling)

A croissant or a cereal bar – which contains more calories?

Put your knowledge to the test with our food labelling quiz and find out how much you know about the food you eat.

## Calories calculator

[bhf.org.uk/heart-health/prevention/calorie-calculator.aspx](http://bhf.org.uk/heart-health/prevention/calorie-calculator.aspx)

How many calories can you burn going for a run or even cleaning the house?

Find out with our online calorie calculator.

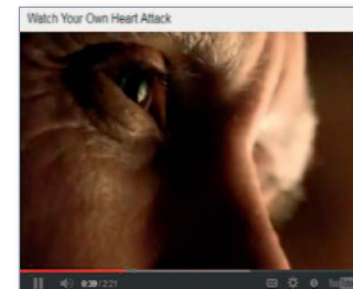
## Alcohol calculator

[bhf.org.uk/alcoholcalculator](http://bhf.org.uk/alcoholcalculator)

A fun and visual way to learn more about the number of units in alcoholic drinks, with guidelines for men and women.

## Watch your own heart attack

[bhf.org.uk/heartattack](http://bhf.org.uk/heartattack)



This two minute video describes the symptoms and experiences of having a heart attack.

## Hands-only CPR game

[bhf.org.uk/handsonlycpr](http://bhf.org.uk/handsonlycpr)



Have a go at hands-only CPR skills on the computer.

## Vinnie Jones – Staying alive

[youtube.com/watch?v=ILxjxB4zNk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=ILxjxB4zNk)



This short video, available on YouTube, teaches life-saving hands-only CPR skills.

# TOP TEN TIPS FOR PREVENTING CORONARY HEART DISEASE (CHD)

1. **Stopping smoking** is the single most important thing you can do to improve your heart health. Within one year of stopping, your risk of developing CHD is halved.
2. Body mass index (BMI) is a calculation to see if you are a **healthy weight** for your height. Your body shape is also important and your waist measurement can also give an indication of your risk.
3. Adults should **be active daily**, building up to at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week in bouts of 10 minutes or more. Some activity is better than none!
4. The most common cause of high **blood cholesterol** in the UK is eating too much saturated fat, so remember to check food labels.
5. Fresh, frozen, chilled, canned and dried fruit and vegetables and 100% juice – they all count towards your **five a day!**
6. **Oily fish** includes herring, mackerel, pilchards, sardines, trout and salmon (canned and fresh) and fresh tuna (not canned). Oily fish contains omega-3 fats, which is a particular type of polyunsaturated fat that can help keep your heart healthy. As part of a healthy diet you should aim to have two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily.
7. Salt is linked to high blood pressure and most people eat far more salt than they need. Use herbs, spices and garlic to make your food tasty and **cut down on salt**.
8. **Avoid binge drinking;** Alcohol contains calories and can make you put on weight. National guidance recommends a maximum two to three units for women and three to four units for men per day.
9. The way you deal with **stress** can encourage unhealthy behaviour. Cut down on smoking and alcohol, and try to do more exercise instead to help beat the blues.
10. You're likely to be entitled to a free **NHS health check** if you are aged over 40, to determine your risk of developing CHD, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease.

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Picking up leaflets on healthy eating and free activities such as local walks opened my eyes to what's around. If it hadn't been for the leaflets I probably wouldn't have thought about changing my diet.

I realised that my weight was starting to impact on me – I wasn't enjoying playing sport as much as I used to and the types of things I was eating were contributing to my weight gain. So I signed up for the weight loss group at work and have lost 4 stone so far and am still motivated to achieve my target weight.”

**Sharon Goss,**  
**Croydon Council employee**



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**This section features the most common questions that we hear at events with some quick fire answers and guidance on where to find out more.**

**Remember, nobody will expect you to have all the answers. Your role at the event is to raise awareness, not supply medical information.**

The easiest thing you can do is direct people to the relevant booklet where they can find out more.

Alternatively please signpost to:

- **bhf.org.uk**
- Our nurse-run Heart Helpline on **0300 330 3311**.

## Physical activity

### How much exercise should I do?

You should aim to do 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity each week. Sessions of ten minutes are a good way to start and you can gradually build up the number of 10 minute sessions you do each day.

Moderate intensity activity makes you feel warmer, breathe harder and make your heart beat faster than usual, but you should still be able to hold a conversation.

### What counts as physical activity?

Brisk walking, cycling and swimming are good examples of aerobic activity, but so are mowing the lawn and vacuuming! Walking up stairs and carrying shopping are good examples of strength activities and activities such as yoga and Tai Chi are good for flexibility.

- For more information, please refer to our physical activity publications listed on page 7.

## Healthy eating

### What foods should I eat more/less of?

About a third of the food you eat should be made up of fruits and vegetables for vitamins and minerals. You should try to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

About a third of your plate should be starchy foods such as bread, rice, potatoes and pasta for energy. These don't have to be fattening, as long as you bake, boil or steam, rather than fry.

You should aim to have two-three portions of milk and dairy foods a day for calcium, but choose low-fat versions when possible.

You should eat protein-rich foods such as pulses, beans, meat and fish two or three times a day.

You should only have a small amount of foods and drinks that are high in fat and/or sugar (such as cakes, crisps, sweets, chocolate and fizzy drinks).

### How much salt should I have per day?

The maximum recommended amount of salt for adults is 6g a day. That's about a teaspoon.

- For more information, please refer to our healthy eating publications listed on page 7.

## Health checks

### What about blood pressure?

There are several factors that can lead to high blood pressure, including being overweight or obese, having too much salt in your diet and drinking too much alcohol. Addressing these issues can help to reduce your blood pressure.

Your genes and certain types of medication can also affect blood pressure.

For the general population, the target is a blood pressure of less than 140/90mmHg. If you have heart disease or diabetes, then the target is below 130/80mmHg.

- For more information, please refer to our blood pressure booklet listed on page 7.

### What about cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fatty substance which is found in the blood. It is mainly made in the liver. Cholesterol plays an essential role in how every cell in the body works. However, too much can increase your risk of heart problems.

The most common cause of high blood cholesterol levels is eating too much saturated fat.

- For more information, please refer to our Reducing your blood cholesterol booklet listed on page 7.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is BMI?

Body mass index (BMI) is a measurement to give you an indication of whether you are overweight, underweight or at a healthy weight for your height and gender.

- We have a free online BMI calculator available at [bhf.org.uk/bmi](https://bhf.org.uk/bmi)

## Stress

### How does stress affect my heart?

Stress can lead to unhealthy behaviours to help us cope, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, eating unhealthy foods for comfort. These could be damaging to your heart.

Our body's reaction to stress is an increased heart rate and increased blood pressure. This can be a problem if this is sustained for a long time.

### How can I reduce stress levels?

Identify what makes you stressed. Try doing more physical activity, as exercise can help improve mood. Make time for relaxing activities such as yoga, going for a walk or talking to friends. If you need help to deal with stress, anxiety and/or depression, speak to your GP.

- For more information, please refer to our Coping with Stress booklet listed on page 7.

## Heart disease, heart attack and cardiac arrest

### How does diabetes increase my risk of heart disease?

High glucose levels in the blood affect the walls of the arteries, making them more likely to develop fatty deposits, which can lead to heart disease.

- For more information, please refer to our Diabetes and your heart booklet listed on page 7.

### Does heart disease only affect men?

No. Heart disease kills as many women as men. It kills three times more women than breast cancer.

- For more information, please refer to our Women and Heart Disease booklet listed on page 7.

### Are some ethnic groups more at risk?

Yes. Some people from South Asian and African-Caribbean backgrounds have a greater risk of developing heart disease and/or stroke.

- For more information, please refer to the specialist pages on our website where you can find information in different languages.

## How does drinking alcohol increase my risk of heart disease?

Drinking excess alcohol can increase the risk of developing abnormal heart rhythms, high blood pressure, damage to the heart muscle and other diseases such as stroke, liver problems and some cancers. It is also high in calories so it can lead to weight gain.

- For more information, please refer to [bhf.org.uk/alcohol](https://bhf.org.uk/alcohol)

### What's the difference between a heart attack and cardiac arrest?

A heart attack happens when a blood clot blocks the coronary artery, which starves the heart of blood and oxygen and can cause damage to the heart muscle if not treated promptly.

Heart attacks are almost always caused by CHD, where the arteries become narrowed by the build-up of fatty deposits called atheroma.

Cardiac arrest is when the heart stops pumping blood around the body and normal breathing stops. This can follow a heart attack or be caused by other trauma.

If you suspect a heart attack or cardiac arrest, **call 999 immediately**.

- Why not show our heart attack and hands-only CPR videos at your event? See page 11 for more information.

### How we can help

We hope that your heart health awareness event is a success and the start of other health and wellbeing initiatives in your workplace.

The Health at Work team is here to offer support if you need it. If you're not yet a Health at Work member, sign up free at [bhf.org.uk/healthatwork](https://bhf.org.uk/healthatwork). You'll receive a free welcome pack, monthly e-newsletter and access to our free resources and online community.

In addition, we also offer:

### Fun and engaging challenges

We have developed free workplace challenge toolkits, such as our pedometer challenge, around the world in 30 days healthy eating challenge and the stair climb challenge.

To make it as simple as possible for the challenge coordinator, we have produced ready-made instructions, promotion templates and progress charts, so all you need to do is download or order the pack to get started.

- For more information please see [bhf.org.uk/healthatwork](https://bhf.org.uk/healthatwork)

### Heart health workshops

We can come to your place of work and deliver a 45–60 minute workshop on heart health for up to 30 employees for a cost of £300. The workshop is interactive and includes activities on a topic of your choice, either physical activity, healthy eating or mental wellbeing.

- For more information please see [bhf.org.uk/heartworkshops](https://bhf.org.uk/heartworkshops)

### Health and wellbeing days

These days are a great way to engage colleagues through interactive sessions run by our experts. Staff work their way through four zones: eat well, be active, changing habits and think well.

Up to 180 staff can be reached in one day through a series of sessions. We can also accommodate multiple sites. Typically the day costs around £2,900.

- For more information please see [bhf.org.uk/healthdays](https://bhf.org.uk/healthdays)

### Evaluating your event

Evaluating the success of your event through attendee feedback is important for building a case for running future events and to learn what worked well and what could be improved. To encourage people to give their feedback, you could:

- Ask them to complete a simple feedback form
- Send out a survey after the event
- Ask attendees to write down one thing they have learned and one thing they plan to do as a result of the event, as well as one thing that wasn't useful.

As an incentive to give you their feedback, you could enter names into a prize draw. You could also run a competition to encourage people to implement and achieve healthier lifestyle choices.

We'd love to hear about your event and how it went. If you'd like to feature as a case study on our Success Stories webpage, just get in touch at [healthatwork@bhf.org.uk](mailto:healthatwork@bhf.org.uk)

### How you can help

As a charity we rely on the generosity of people like you to fund our vital work. There are many ways you can get involved and play a crucial role in our efforts to fight for every heartbeat.

For more information please visit [bhf.org.uk](https://bhf.org.uk) or call 0300 330 3322.

**1** Become a volunteer and help run our shops, support local events and fundraising or even campaign for the UK's heart health – there's something for everyone.

**2** Take part in one of our events – they're a great way for you to have fun, get fit and save lives. Choose from cycles, runs, walks and many more.

**3** Join our Heartstart initiative and learn to save lives with the skills of emergency life support. Over 2.6 million already have.

**4** Give to your local BHF shop – it's so easy to donate your unwanted items to us and help us raise vital funds.

**5** Make a one-off donation, set up a direct debit, give in memory or leave a gift in your will – there's lots of ways to support us.

**6** Shop from the heart with our online shop – all profits from the BHF Shop help fund our life-saving work.

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

