


Session 2

What is coronary heart disease?

The aim of the session is to understand:

- ✓ What coronary heart disease is.
- ✓ How coronary heart disease affects different communities.
- ✓ How you can reduce your risk of developing it.

The information you need to get across is:

 10 minutes

What is coronary heart disease?

Coronary heart disease is a condition where the **coronary arteries** (that supply blood and oxygen to the heart) become narrowed or hardened by a gradual build-up of fatty material in their walls. This is called **atherosclerosis** and the fatty material is called **atheroma**.

In time, the artery may become so narrow that it cannot deliver enough oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle when it needs it – such as when you are exercising. The pain and discomfort that you feel as a result is called **angina**.

If the atheroma becomes unstable, it may break off and form a blood clot. If the blood clot blocks the coronary artery, the heart muscle is starved of blood and oxygen, and may become permanently damaged. This is known as a **heart attack** (myocardial infarction).

Cardiovascular disease is also called **heart and circulatory disease**. It means all diseases of the heart and circulation, including coronary heart disease (**angina** and **heart attack**) and **stroke**. Cardiovascular disease is the most common cause of death in the UK and causes more than one in every three deaths¹.

The good news is that, by making simple lifestyle changes, you can reduce your risk of getting coronary heart disease. If you already have heart disease, furring up of the arteries isn't reversible, but the risk of further heart problems can be reduced by making these changes.

Why are South Asian communities more at risk?

South Asian people living in the UK are up to twice as likely to die from cardiovascular disease before the age of 69 than the rest of the UK population². Pakistani men and women, and Bangladeshi men have a higher risk than other South Asian groups².

People of South Asian origin also have a higher rate of premature death from **stroke** than the general UK population. And the rates for those born in West Africa and the Caribbean are even higher².

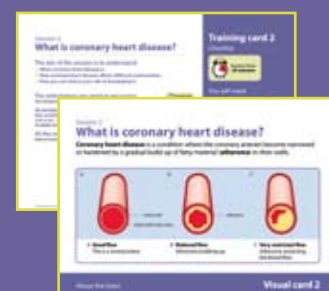
Checklist



Session time:
20 minutes

You will need

- Training card 2
- Visual card 2



- Summary sheet 2



USB

How can you reduce your risk of coronary heart disease?

There are several things you can do to help prevent coronary heart disease, including:


- stopping smoking
- controlling your blood pressure
- becoming more physically active
- eating a healthy, balanced diet
- reducing your cholesterol
- if you drink alcohol, keeping within the recommended levels
- losing weight (if you need to) and maintaining a healthy weight
- trying to prevent or control diabetes
- learning to deal with stress.

Pre-session preparation

Print out *Summary sheet 2* [\(USB\)](#)

Activities

Key activity: Coronary heart disease discussion (whole group)

 10 minutes

Discuss coronary heart disease with the group. Ask them to answer the following questions:

1. What do you think happens to the arteries over time?

- Over a period of many years, the walls of your arteries can gradually become 'furred up' with fatty deposits (atheroma). If the arteries get too narrow, the blood supply to your heart can be restricted or even blocked. This is coronary heart disease.

2. At what age do you think this starts happening?

- Although coronary heart disease mainly affects older people, the process starts when you are young.

3. Do you think this process is reversible?

- The furring up of the arteries is not reversible. However, you can slow the process down by making some healthy lifestyle changes.

4. What do you think you can do to reduce your risk of coronary heart disease?

- stop smoking
- control your blood pressure
- become more physically active
- eat a healthy, balanced diet
- reduce your cholesterol
- if you drink alcohol, keep within the recommended levels
- maintain a healthy weight
- try to prevent diabetes, by making simple lifestyle changes
- learn to deal with stress.

At the end of the session

Hand out *Summary sheet 2* [\(USB\)](#)

Background information

Although you now have all the basic information you need to deliver Session 2, here's some more detail you might find useful.

- Your risk of getting **coronary heart disease** or having a **stroke** depends on how many **risk factors** you have, and how strong each risk factor is – for example, how high your blood pressure or cholesterol level is.
- Research shows that making changes to your lifestyle can have a major effect on reducing your risk.
- Knowing about risk factors – how they affect your health and how they increase your risk – can help you make the necessary lifestyle changes and help you feel more in control of your heart health.
- These do not have to be big changes; small changes can make a big difference.
- Each person's risk is individual to them. Although two people may appear to have the same risk factors, the impact of the risk factors may not be the same.
- For up-to-date statistics on **coronary heart disease** please visit **www.heartstats.org**

For more information

bhf.org.uk

BHF Heart Helpline: 0300 330 3311 – for information and support on anything related to heart health. This service is available in English only.

BHF DVDs:

Living to prevent heart disease (aimed at South Asians, with soundtracks in English and five South Asian languages)

Risking it (English soundtrack and subtitles)

To order these free resources, call the **BHF Orderline** on **0870 600 6566**.