

Checklist



Session time:
20 minutes

You will need

● Training card 4

● Visual card 4



● Summary sheet 4



USB

Session 4

Modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors

The aim of the session is to understand:

- ✓ What a risk factor is.
- ✓ What the risk factors for coronary heart disease are.
- ✓ What modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors are.
- ✓ Whether stress is a risk factor.

The information you need to get across is:

 10 minutes

What is a risk factor?

A risk factor is something that increases your chance of getting a disease.

The more risk factors for coronary heart disease that you have, the greater your chance of getting the disease.

What are the risk factors for coronary heart disease?

Some risk factors are called **modifiable**, because you can do something about them. There are other risk factors, called **non-modifiable**, which you can't change. However, many non-modifiable risk factors can be controlled and their effect reduced by making changes to your lifestyle.

What are the modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors?

Modifiable risk factors include:

- smoking
- high blood pressure
- diabetes
- physical inactivity
- being overweight
- high blood cholesterol.

The good news is that the effect of many risk factors can be changed (you cannot change the risk factor, only its effect). The effect of these modifiable risk factors can be reduced if you make lifestyle changes.

These modifiable risk factors are covered in more detail in *Topic 4: Preventing risk factors*:

- high blood pressure (in Session 7 on page 36)
- physical inactivity (in Session 8 on page 40)
- smoking (in Session 10 on page 48)
- diabetes (in Session 11 on page 53)
- high blood cholesterol (in Session 12b on page 62)
- being overweight (in Session 13 on page 71)

Non-modifiable risk factors are:

- age
- ethnic background
- family history of heart disease.

Age

The older you are, the more likely you are to develop coronary heart disease or to have a **cardiac event** (angina, heart attack or stroke).

Ethnic background

South Asians living in the UK are twice as likely to develop coronary heart disease compared to the rest of the UK population. Also, people from African Caribbean backgrounds have a higher than average risk of developing high blood pressure.

But remember that you can still reduce your risk as much as possible by controlling your other risk factors.

Family history

Your own risk of developing coronary heart disease is increased if:

- your father or brother was diagnosed with the disease, or had a cardiac event under the age of 55
- your mother or sister was diagnosed with the disease or had a cardiac event under 65.

If you have a family history of heart disease, it may help to reduce your own risk if you look at what the risk factors affecting your family member were. Ask yourself:

- Did they smoke?
- Were they overweight?
- Did they have a diet high in saturated fat?
- Were they physically inactive?
- Did they have diabetes?

If the answer is yes to one or more of these, then you can reduce your risk by making sure your lifestyle is not the same as theirs.

Some risk factors, such as being overweight, are sometimes related to lifestyle habits that are passed on from one generation to the next. However, it's also likely that **genes** are responsible for passing on the risk of developing coronary heart disease. Genes can also pass on other conditions, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels. Both of these conditions increase the risk of getting coronary heart disease.

Is stress a risk factor for coronary heart disease?

Stress is not considered to be a direct risk factor for coronary heart disease, as we are not sure how it affects the development of the disease. However, the way that you deal with stress can encourage less healthy behaviour, such as smoking, drinking too much alcohol and overeating. These can all increase your risk of developing coronary heart disease.

Pre-session preparation

Print out *Summary sheet 4* [\[USB\]](#)

Activities

Key activity: Risk factors for coronary heart disease discussion
(whole group)



Right at the start of the session, before you cover the risk factors for coronary heart disease, ask the group for suggestions on what they think the risk factors are. Write them on a flipchart.

After you've covered the risk factors information, look at the group's suggestions on the flipchart and ask them which they think are correct. Then, using *Visual card 4* as your guide, draw a circle around the correct risk factors. **(5 minutes)**

Ask the group to divide the risk factors you have circled into two categories – 'modifiable' and 'non-modifiable'. It's useful to rewrite them on a new page of the flipchart under the two headings. **(5 minutes)**

At the end of the session

Hand out *Summary sheet 4* 

Background information

Although you now have all the basic information you need to deliver Session 4, here's some more detail you might find useful.

Is there anything else which affects your risk?

People's income and the type of jobs they do, all appear to have an effect on how likely they are to get coronary heart disease. For example, people who work in manual jobs have a higher rate of coronary heart disease than people in other jobs, and people who live in poorer areas or are on lower incomes are also more likely to get the disease.

Recent studies have also shown that individuals that lack support in their working environment may also be more at risk of developing coronary heart disease. Recognising and dealing with stressful situations will help to prevent individuals using bad habits, such as smoking, drinking and eating more, to deal with stress.

Diabetes is classified as a modifiable risk factor. However, if you have diabetes, you cannot cure it. This means that anything that you can do to modify your lifestyle and keep your diabetes under control will help to reduce your risk of having a heart attack or developing angina. Having diabetes intensifies the effects of other risk factors that you may have, so it is important to reduce the risk of developing it.

While a family history of coronary heart disease is non-modifiable, ie, if you have a family history of coronary heart disease, you cannot change it, making changes to your lifestyle will significantly reduce the risk of you developing coronary heart disease prematurely.

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:

Risking it (English soundtrack and subtitles)

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

BHF booklets:

Looking after your heart (aimed at South Asians, in English and five South Asian languages)

Keep your heart healthy (in English, Polish and Welsh)

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