

Summary sheet 5

Introduction to screening



What is screening for coronary heart disease?

Screening means to examine or check a person for a disease or diseases. For coronary heart disease, this involves checking certain measurements that can affect your risk, for example:

- waist measurement
- weight
- blood pressure
- blood cholesterol level
- blood sugar level.

What is self-assessment?

The following measurements can be checked by a health professional, but you can also check them yourself as part of a self-assessment:

- waist
- weight
- Body Mass Index (BMI)

Your weight, body shape and BMI are all important to your heart health. (See Summary sheet 13.)

What screening needs to be done by health professionals?

A doctor or nurse can carry out a **heart health risk assessment** to find out your risk of coronary heart disease. This is sometimes called a **heart health assessment** or a **cardiovascular risk assessment**. The assessment gives doctors and nurses information about your future risk and on what they can advise you to do to keep your heart healthy.

There are several different tests to assess people's risk of coronary heart disease. Health professionals may recommend different tests for different people, depending on the person's family history:

Blood cholesterol

This is a blood test to find out your cholesterol level. It is especially important if you have a family history of high cholesterol. It's likely that you will have your cholesterol measured as part of a risk assessment. You will be asked not to eat or drink anything other than water for 12 hours before the test.

Blood sugar level

This is a blood test to find out how much sugar you have in your blood. It will tell your doctor if you have, or are at risk of developing, diabetes (see Summary sheet 11 part a and b). It is done at the same time as the cholesterol test.

Blood pressure

This will tell you if your blood pressure is too high (see Summary sheet 7). If it is, and your doctor thinks that you are at risk of developing coronary heart disease, they will take several readings over a couple of weeks. This will establish whether you have a consistently high blood pressure reading.

If you have one or more of the risk factors mentioned above, you should see your doctor for a full risk assessment. Home testing kits **are not** a suitable replacement for the information that your doctor can give you.

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. Phone lines open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, similar cost to 01 or 02 numbers.

BHF booklets:

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

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