

Salt and Coronary Heart Disease



What is Coronary Heart Disease?

Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) is the term used to describe what happens when the heart's blood supply is reduced or blocked. CHD can refer to heart attacks or heart failure.

What causes Coronary Heart Disease?

Raised blood pressure is a major risk factor for CHD. Over time, untreated high blood pressure puts strain on the heart and can lead to the thickening of the heart muscle which can reduce the effectiveness of the heart's pumping action and result in heart attacks or heart failure.

A **high salt diet** increases your blood pressure and will therefore **increase your risk of CHD**.

How common is Coronary Heart Disease?

CHD is one of the biggest causes of death in the UK with one in seven men and one in twelve women dying from the disease, mostly caused by a heart attack. In the UK, there is one heart attack every three minutes, with three out of ten people surviving.

Many of these cases of CHD could be prevented simply by eating less salt.

Who is at risk of Coronary Heart Disease?

Anyone can get CHD, however there are a number of factors which can increase your risk. You are most at risk of getting CHD if you:

- are over 55 years of age
- have a family history of CHD
- have diabetes
- are of Asian or African descent

Although you cannot change your age, sex or background, you can still significantly reduce your risk of getting CHD by making simple lifestyle changes.

If you have a diet which is high in salt or fat, low in fruit and vegetables or if you smoke or are overweight, then your risk of getting CHD is higher.

Preventing Coronary Heart Disease

The good news is that with simple lifestyle changes such as improving diet, increasing exercise and stopping smoking, you can help reduce your risk of getting CHD.

Diet is one of the risk factors that you can easily change to help reduce your risk of CHD. Reducing your salt and fat intake, eating more fruit and vegetables and drinking sensibly can help to prevent CHD.

Salt Intake

Reducing your intake of high salt foods, particularly processed foods which contain a lot of hidden salt, can really help you to reduce your risk of CHD. Currently the average salt intake in the UK is on average 8g per day; much higher than the daily recommended maximum limit of 6g!



Potassium

Eating more fruit and vegetables will increase your intake of potassium – this is a mineral which helps to counteract the effect that salt has on increasing water retention and blood pressure.



Top tips

- Most of the salt you eat (75%) is hidden in processed foods. Check labels of products such as bread, cereal, soup, sauces and meat products and choose lower salt options
- Don't add salt when cooking or at the table; foods may taste bland at first it will only take a couple of weeks for you to adjust
- Adults should be active for 30 minutes, five times a week; try getting off the bus or train stop earlier and walking into work
- Have regular blood pressure checks to monitor your progress