

PHDS Website – CHD Page – NHS Health checks

The NHS Health Check is for adults in England between the ages of 40 and 74, and is being introduced over the next five years. It will give you and your GP a clearer picture of your health, and help you take action to reduce your risk of heart disease, as well as stroke, type 2 diabetes and kidney disease.

The NHS Health Check consists of a few simple tests that will give you and your GP or health professional (practice nurse, pharmacist) a clearer picture of your risk of developing four common but often preventable diseases: heart disease, stroke, kidney disease or type 2 diabetes. You will also be asked some simple questions about your medical history. All the tests are simple to carry out, and there will be plenty of time to discuss the results with your GP or health professional afterwards.

On the day

NHS Health Check takes around 20-30 minutes and will usually be divided into two parts:

- Questions and health tests that will give a picture of your health.
- A discussion of the results, including personalised advice and, if necessary, treatment to help you maintain or improve your health and lower your risk of these four diseases.

How the tests happen

Which health professional does your NHS Health Check depends on where you live and where you have the check. If you have the check at your GP surgery, for example, your practise nurse or a healthcare assistant may conduct the interview and tests.

If you have your check at a local pharmacy, it may be your pharmacist who does the tests. Wherever the check occurs, all tests and subsequent discussions will take place in a private room.

Getting your results

The second part of an NHS Health Check is a discussion of your results with a trained healthcare professional. This may happen at the same appointment as your tests or you may be asked to return at a later date.

During this discussion you will learn more about what your results mean. You will talk about how your results are related to your risk of developing the four diseases. You will be given personalised advice on what you can do to lower your risk and maintain or improve your vascular health. That means a better chance of a longer, healthier life.

The correct action for you will depend on your results. You may receive advice on how to get more physical activity into your daily routine, cut down on alcohol or eat a healthier diet.

NHS Health Check cannot tell you with certainty that you will or will not develop heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes or kidney disease in the future. No health test

can do that. The check assesses your risk: the likelihood that you will develop one of those diseases.

Your risk of developing one of those diseases is never fixed. You can change it through your actions.

The questions and health tests that form part of NHS Health Check help to give you and your GP a better picture of your vascular health now, and of your risk of developing one of the four diseases in the future. Your results will help to highlight any potential risks earlier. That means you will be better placed to take action, improving your chance of a healthier life.

What is risk?

When your risk of developing a disease is talked about, it refers to the chance, or likelihood, that you will develop that disease at some time in your life.

We are all familiar with the idea of chance. We know, for example, that when we toss a coin there is a 50% chance of it landing on heads and a 50% chance of it landing on tails.

The same idea of chance or likelihood applies to these diseases. No one is certain to develop heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes or kidney disease, and no one is certain not to. We all have some risk.

The aim of the NHS Health Check is to give you and your GP a clearer picture of that risk, and provide personalised advice on what you can do to reduce it.

Lowering your risk

We know that everyone is at risk of developing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes or kidney disease. That is why everyone who has an NHS Health Check will be given personalised advice on how to manage that risk.

Some risk factors are fixed, such as age and a family history of vascular disease. There is nothing you can do to change these risk factors.

But your risk is also influenced by many aspects of your lifestyle, including diet and physical activity, your weight, how much you drink, and whether you smoke. These are all things you can change, with the right support if necessary.

If you are identified as being at a lower risk, you may be given lifestyle advice that will help you to maintain or improve your health. This could be tips on how to improve your diet, cut down on alcohol, or get more physical activity into your daily routine

If you are at high risk, you may be offered relevant treatments. Statins, for example, are a medication that help to control cholesterol levels, and there are other medications that help to lower blood pressure when it is raised.

The results of your NHS Health Check will give you and your GP a clearer picture of your health, and your risk of developing one of the vascular diseases (heart disease,

stroke or kidney disease), and of type 2 diabetes (which can lead to vascular disease). You are able to discuss these results with your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist, and you will be offered personalised advice on how to maintain or improve your health.