

A Guide to NHS Health Checks: Frequently Asked Questions

What is NHS Health Check?

NHS Health Check is a national prevention programme designed to help lower your risk of four common but often preventable diseases: heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease.

It is for adults in England aged between 40-74 who have not already been diagnosed with any of the four conditions. If eligible, you will be invited for a check once every 5 years.

It will give you and your GP a clearer picture of your health, and individually tailored advice will be provided on how to reduce risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and kidney disease.

Why do I need an NHS Health Check?

People are invited for an NHS Health Check if their age falls in the population which is being screened for common diseases that affect the 40+ age group.

As the body's age increases, so does your risk of developing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and kidney disease.

Everyone is at some risk of developing these four diseases in the future. But by identifying that risk early, and taking steps to reduce it, one can improve their chance of maintaining or improving their health as they get older.

NHS Health Check will help to identify the risk of developing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes or kidney disease. Together, these four diseases are the largest cause of death in the UK.

There are certain things that will put people at even greater risk:

- Being overweight
- Lack of exercise
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol

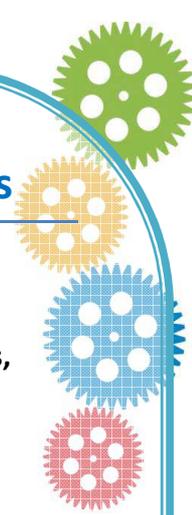
Both men and women can develop these conditions, and having one can increase the risk of developing another in the future

Free NHS Health Check

Helping you prevent heart disease, stroke,
diabetes and kidney disease.



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What happens at the check?

The purpose of the check is to assess your risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease and stroke

- The check should last 20-30 minutes
- You will be asked some simple questions. For instance, regarding your family history and any current medications that you may take
- Height, weight, age, sex and ethnicity will be recorded
- Blood pressure will be taken
- A simple blood test will be taken to check cholesterol and blood glucose level

What happens after the check?

There will be a simple discussion on how to reduce your risk and stay healthy

- Results will be explained
- Personalised advice will be given on how to lower risk and maintain a healthy lifestyle
- If raised blood pressure is found, a further blood test will be taken to assess the kidneys
- Depending on the result of the check there may be a further blood test to look for type 2 diabetes.
- Medication may be prescribed to help maintain your health.

What happens with my results & how do they help?

The results will give both you and your GP a clearer picture of your health, and the 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). There will be time to discuss these results, and the advice will be personalised on how to maintain or improve health. For instance:

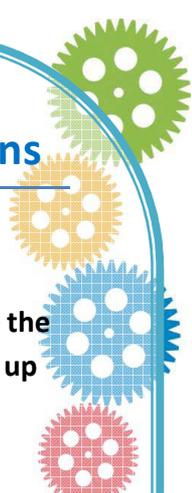
- Giving up smoking,
- Increasing physical activity & improving diet

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I have no illnesses, why do I need this check?

We would like even those who are well to attend the NHS Health Check. This is because the check helps to identify possible hidden risks that people may have early, which if picked up and acted on will improve their chances of living a healthier life.

What is Cardiovascular disease?

Cardiovascular diseases are diseases of the heart or blood vessels that are caused by atheroma (small fatty lumps) that develop within the inside lining of arteries (blood vessels). A patch of atheroma makes an artery narrower, which can reduce the blood flow through the artery. Depending on the location of the atheroma the diseases that it may cause include heart attack, angina, stroke and vascular disease. Modifying unhealthy lifestyles can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

What is risk?

Risk of developing a disease means the chances or likelihood that this disease will develop at some point in life.

Chance or likelihood is seen when you toss a coin- there is a 50% chance of it landing on heads and 50% chance of it landing on tails.

The same idea of chance or likelihood can be seen in these diseases. We all have a certain risk of developing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes or kidney disease- some people have a greater chance than others but this risk can be reduced.

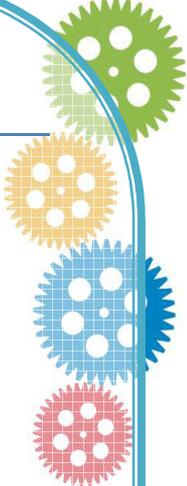
NHS Health Check works to give you and your GP an idea of how great your risk is and provide personalised advice on what you can do to reduce it.

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What is Type 2 diabetes?

In diabetes the body cannot use up sugar (glucose) normally. Glucose increases in the blood and this can cause several serious symptoms. It can also increase your risk of cardiovascular disease.

There are two types of diabetes:

- Type 1 diabetes occurs when the body does not make any insulin- the hormone that controls levels of sugar in the blood- it usually happens before the age of 40.
- Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body fails to make enough insulin or is unable to use insulin effectively. This type of diabetes can happen at any age, is linked to being overweight and accounts for 90% of cases of diabetes.

A healthy lifestyle can help you prevent getting type 2 diabetes. During an NHS Health Check your risk of developing type 2 diabetes will be assessed and you'll be given support and advice you need to help reduce your risk.

What is Kidney disease?

Kidneys work to filter out waste products from our blood and help regulate blood flow around our bodies. When kidneys become damaged they are unable to perform these functions normally leading to a host of symptoms. The most common causes for kidney disease are other long term conditions that cause damage to the kidneys, especially diabetes and high blood pressure.

What is Stroke?

Stroke happens when blood vessels that supply blood to the brain become blocked or damaged. A stroke is a medical emergency.

What is Heart Disease?

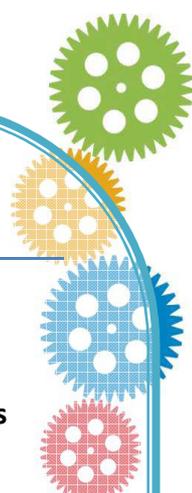
In coronary heart disease, the blood vessels that supply blood to the heart become blocked. This is usually caused by fatty deposits carried in the blood sticking to the walls of the arteries causing them to become narrower.

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Why am I not eligible for an NHS Health Check?

People who have already been diagnosed with some form of cardiovascular disease, such as diabetes, stroke, heart attack or high blood pressure, should already be receiving care and follow up at their GP practice or at hospital outpatient clinics. Your GP will send you an invitation for your annual review which is tailored for each condition and each patient. An annual review will cover all the relevant aspects of the NHS Health Check plus more specific care related to your condition and ensures that you are being appropriately managed.

Your annual review is an opportunity for you to discuss any concerns or needs relating to your care or your condition with your practice nurse or GP.

Could you be outside the age criteria for an NHS Health Check?

If you are below 40 your risk of cardiovascular disease is low and you will be invited to attend your NHS Health Check once you reach 40. If you would like advice about aspects of your lifestyle such as your weight, healthy eating, physical activity or would like to stop smoking, then please contact your practice regarding the services on offer.

If you are 75 and over you may well be in regular contact with your GP and already receiving regular reviews and checks regarding your health. If you are within this age group you may benefit from discussing your individual needs with your practice nurse or GP.

However if you are at all worried about any aspect of your health then you should make an appointment to see your GP.

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