



# BE ACTIVE FOR LIFE

Over 65? Keep your heart  
healthy with physical activity

"FEEL ENERGISED"  
IMPROVE  
STRENGTH + BALANCE  
TRY SOMETHING **NEW**



**FIGHT  
FOR EVERY  
HEARTBEAT**

bhf.org.uk

## Introduction

The British Heart Foundation is fighting for every heartbeat.

Throughout this booklet, aimed at people aged 65 and over, we explain how moving more often and being active can help you reduce your risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD), and why that is important.

Being active is good for your health. It can help prevent and manage a variety of conditions including CHD, stroke and Type 2 diabetes. It can also improve the way you look and feel.

If you're already active try our booklet *Get active, stay active* which will help you keep up and increase your activity levels.

You can enjoy the benefits of being more active whatever your age, size or physical condition. Changing a few of your daily habits can soon add up to a more active lifestyle. It's never too late to start.

Regular physical activity can help with many health problems. But if you have a health problem, check with your doctor about the amount and type of activity that's right for you.

If you have a heart condition or you are at a higher risk of developing CHD – for example because you have high blood pressure – you should read our booklet *Physical activity and your heart* (order code HIS1).

This guide does not replace the advice your health professionals may give you based on their knowledge of your condition.

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## What are the practical benefits of moving more often?

**Moving more often every day can help you avoid a range of health conditions including coronary heart disease (CHD). If you have a condition already, it can help you manage it better. It can also improve the way you look and feel.**

Being more active will help you maintain your independence as you get older. The more active you are, the bigger the benefits to your physical and mental health.

### Brenda's story

“ I don't drive and I try to walk everywhere. I have a little tip, which is to walk as if you're late for an appointment. When you retire I think it's all too easy to get into stroller mode!

I used to have a hectic lifestyle as a school bursar and I think the contact you get with other people through exercise is just as important to your wellbeing as the exercise itself. The two go together. I go to a weekly keep fit class, which I love. I walk there and back so I feel I have a whole morning dedicated to exercise. I just love the group; we have such good fun. ”

**By being active, you may:**

- have more energy
- feel less stressed or anxious
- lose weight
- get a healthier body shape and appearance
- find it easier to keep in touch with friends
- have higher levels of energy
- find it easier to learn and remember things
- sleep more easily
- have more confidence.

**Being active can also help to prevent illness in the long term by reducing your risk of:**

- CHD
- Type 2 diabetes
- high blood pressure
- obesity
- some cancers (such as colon cancer).

**Being active is helpful even if you already have a condition. It can help to manage and control:**

- CHD (including angina)
- Type 2 diabetes
- being overweight or obese
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol levels
- joint and bone problems such as arthritis.



## It has a positive effect on your bone and muscle health, reducing your risk of:

- ✓ osteoporosis
- ✓ osteoarthritis
- ✓ back pain.

Being active will also help you to keep in touch with your family and friends, keep up with your hobbies and stay active in your local community.



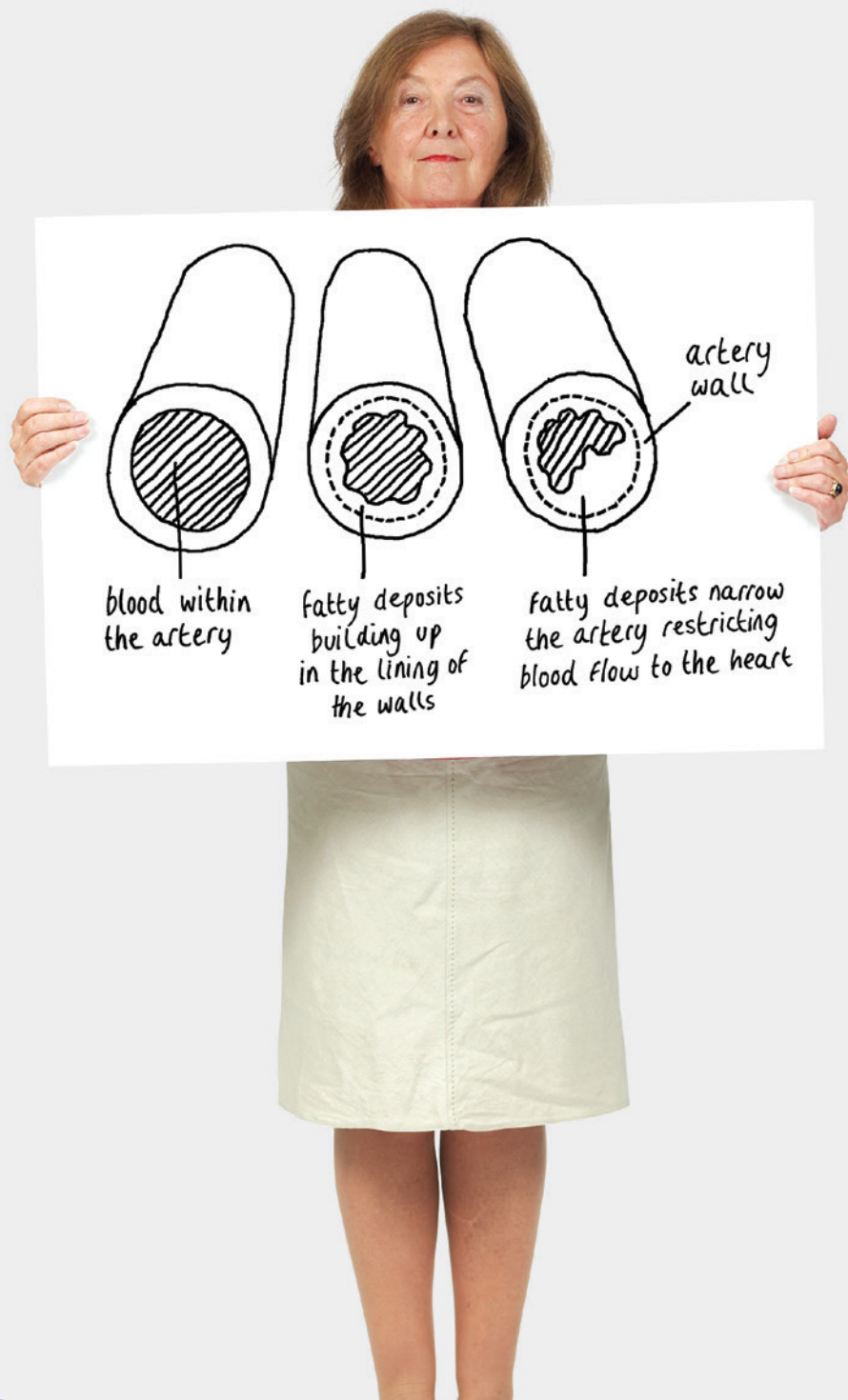
### Fast fact

**You may be worried about overdoing things and harming yourself.**

Staying inactive puts you at a higher risk of getting CHD than gradually increasing your activity levels.



Turn to the next page to read more about CHD.



## What is CHD?

**CHD is the single most common cause of death for both men and women in the UK. It begins when your coronary arteries – the arteries that supply your heart muscle with oxygen-rich blood – become blocked or narrowed because of a build-up of fatty deposits.**

In time, your arteries may become so narrow that they cannot deliver enough oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle. This can cause **angina**. Angina is an uncomfortable feeling, tightness or pain in your chest which may spread to your arms, neck, jaw, back or stomach.

Sometimes the fatty deposits can become unstable, and a piece may break away causing a blood clot to form. If this blood clot blocks your coronary artery, part of your heart muscle will be starved of oxygen-rich blood and may become permanently damaged. This is a **heart attack**.

**Heart attacks can kill. If you think you or anyone else is having a heart attack, you should phone 999 for an ambulance immediately.**



If you want to know more, read our booklets, *Heart attack* (HIS7) and *Angina* (HIS6). Go to [bhf.org.uk/publications](https://www.bhf.org.uk/publications) to read them online.

## Why should you be active?

**Every seven minutes, someone dies from a heart attack. If you're not active, you are more likely to have a heart attack than someone who is active.**

- 1 CHD by itself is the most common cause of death in the UK. Around one in six men and one in nine women die from the disease.
- 2 Men are more than four times as likely to die of CHD than prostate cancer.
- 3 Women are more than three times as likely to die of CHD than breast cancer.
- 4 Being inactive is a major health risk and one of the main causes of death and disability in the UK.
- 5 Physical inactivity is responsible for developing CHD in over one in five people in developed countries.

- 6 In England, only 17% of women and 20% of men aged between 65 and 74 do the recommended amount of physical activity.
- 7 Around six in ten adults in England have high blood cholesterol, which increases your risk of developing CHD.
- 8 If you're not active, your ability to perform daily activities will reduce more quickly than if you are active.

**You need to move more often every day. Something is better than nothing and it'll help you build up your physical activity gradually.**

In time, you should aim to be active every day. Over a week, you should do 150 minutes (2½ hours) of activity in chunks of at least ten minutes.

**15 X 10 MIN SESSIONS**

**ONE WEEK**



## What can you do to be more active?

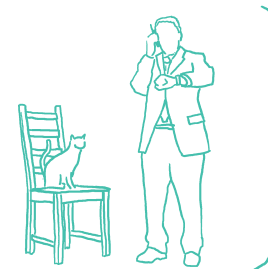
**You might find being active difficult because you have another health condition. Or you might struggle to find time for yourself because you're still working or helping to care for someone close to you.**

There are still things you can do to help yourself.

Try to break up the time you spend sitting still. Ways you can reduce your sitting time include:

- ✓ standing up and walking around when the adverts are on TV
- ✓ planning regular breaks during long car journeys
- ✓ taking regular breaks from the computer or reading a book
- ✓ standing up to talk on the phone.

**You don't need to change your life to be more active. Make small changes you can stick to and build on.**



SMALL CHANGES MAKE A BIG  
**DIFFERENCE**

## Start by moving more often every day. You could:

- ♥ climb the stairs more often
- ♥ walk to visit your friends and neighbours, go to the shops or to places in your local area
- ♥ get off the bus one stop early and walk the rest of the way.

## Doing something is better than nothing. You can increase your levels of activity over time.

Introduce more activity as you go to increase the amount of movement you achieve.



If you're active already, and feel ready to take on more of a challenge, read *Get active, stay active* (G12) for more information, tips and tools.



## What types of aerobic activity?

**To help your heart, you should do activities that make you feel warmer, breathe harder and make your heart beat faster than normal. But, you should still be able to carry on a conversation.**

Activities like walking, dancing, swimming and gardening are good for improving your heart health.

When you do this type of activity, your heart and lungs have to work harder. This will help build your stamina.

It also burns up calories too, helping to control your weight and shape.

There's lots of free and easy things you can do in and around your home.

### Myth buster

**You don't need to do it all at once.**

If you do between 20 and 30 minutes a day, you'll be on track to do 150 minutes (2½ hours) a week.



## Why not:

- ♥ walk your dog more
- ♥ wash your car by hand
- ♥ join a class at your local community centre
- ♥ join a walking group near you
- ♥ do some gardening at home, or in your communal allotment
- ♥ really go for it when doing housework like Hoovering or mopping the floor
- ♥ mow your lawn once a week
- ♥ go for a daily walk or cycle to the shops and back
- ♥ take your grandchildren to their local play area or play with them more at home
- ♥ go dancing with friends.



Find out how many calories you've burned being active. Visit [bhf.org.uk/calories](https://www.bhf.org.uk/calories)

## Strength and balance

**To help keep you strong and steady you also need to include strength and balance activities at least twice a week.**

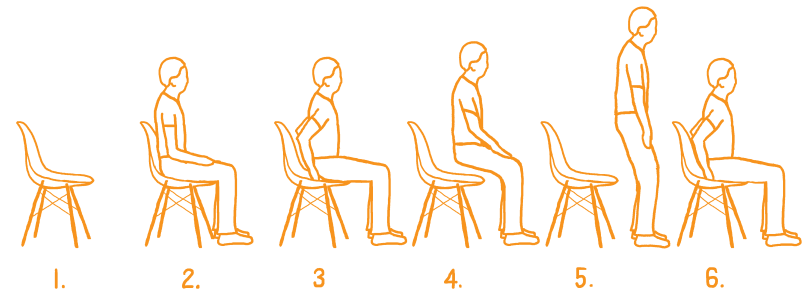
Muscle strengthening activities will make your muscles feel more tension than normal. Activities that help strengthen your muscles include:

- ✓ heavy housework
- ✓ gardening
- ✓ walking up stairs
- ✓ lifting and carrying shopping
- ✓ tai chi
- ✓ dance
- ✓ using weights or resistance bands at home or at a community based class.

**Doing regular sit to stands from a chair will also help.**

Simple things like walking heel to toe, going up on tip toes or standing on one leg for a while can help maintain or **improve your balance**. Other things that help include:

- ✓ tai chi
- ✓ yoga
- ✓ pilates
- ✓ cycling
- ✓ bowls
- ✓ exercise classes that include standing and moving exercises.



### Sit to stand exercise

1. use a sturdy chair
2. sit upright with your feet flat on the floor
3. slide forward to the edge of the chair
4. put your hands on your thighs and push down with them as you start to stand
5. continue to press down as you stand all the way up
6. sit back down into the chair and repeat the exercise.

**STOP!**



## Make sure you're safe



**To make sure your first steps into being active are enjoyable, they need to be safe too.**

### Top tips to stay safe

- 1 Don't do physical activity if you feel unwell or have a high temperature.
- 2 Wear comfortable clothes and shoes that give you good support.
- 3 Remember to drink water before, during and after your activity – don't wait until you're thirsty.
- 4 Avoid exercising outdoors on your own at night.
- 5 Start slowly, and build up the pace of your activity gradually. Make sure you slow down gradually too – don't suddenly stop.
- 6 Do some stretching exercises after your activity to help avoid muscle stiffness the next day.
- 7 Stop if you're in pain, feel dizzy, become tired or feel unwell.

## Setting goals



**Setting a long-term goal will give you something to aim for. Short-term goals are just as important, as they'll give you something to focus on each day.**

### Top tips for setting goals

What do you want to achieve by moving more often?

- 1 Think about what you can do right now.**  
What are you doing already? Do you go to the local park with your grandchildren? Could you walk to get your daily paper?
- 2 What small – but important – changes can you make right away?**  
Why not take the stairs instead of the lift?
- 3 Be sensible. If you're not very active right now, don't set yourself a goal of running a marathon next month.**  
Why not give yourself a target of getting off the bus one stop early and walking the rest of the way home two days a week? Once you've reached that goal, you can think about the next one.

#### Myth buster

**It's never too late to start.**

You benefit from being active whatever your age, even if you've been inactive for a while.



### Stanley's story

“ I have always lived an active life. I am a retired farmer, so physical work outdoors in the fresh air is completely normal for me. I do walk around the farm every day. I just build activity into my life and my leisure.

I do a nine-hole golf course – there are four of us who go. I also play indoor bowls, ten pin bowling. Any sort of bowling I love. I have belonged to a local bowls club for many years. That is very sociable. You meet a lot of people, you make friends and it is a very cheap night's entertainment. ”



# Your personal activity diary

Fill in the diary below to see what you're doing and how much of it counts towards your 150 minutes (2½ hours) a week target.



We've got more weekly activity sheets for you to download on our website. Check out [bhf.org.uk/stayingactive](https://www.bhf.org.uk/stayingactive)

Day of the week	Type of activity Record activities that make you feel warmer, breathe harder and make your heart beat faster than usual, but you should still be able to carry on a conversation.	Time (in minutes) spent doing each activity	Total time (in minutes) spent being active each day
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			



## How did you do?

**Don't worry about what other people can do – what's important is how you feel when you're active.**

In time, you should aim to be active every day. Over a week, you should do 150 minutes (2½ hours) of activity in chunks of at least ten minutes.

Look at your activity diary, see how much activity you did each day and total up the amount you were active over the week.



### If you weren't really active at all

Think about what's stopping you. What are the barriers? How can you deal with them? Think about your goals and your reward. What can you do to meet the goal and enjoy the reward?

### If you did a bit of activity on a couple of days

It's great you're being active. But, being active every day is better for your heart. Try to spread it over the course of a week and think how you can build it into your daily routine.

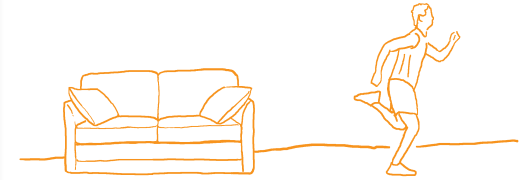
### If you were active for 30 minutes on a couple of days

Try to be active on more days of the week and set yourself a higher target per day. Think how you can build more physical activity into your day.

### If you were active most days of the week

Amazing! You're working really hard to improve your health. Don't stop now. Try to get active every day and build on the amount of activity you're already doing. Keep setting new goals, have fun and stay healthy.

## Peter's story



“ I started to make changes when I had an MOT that told me my blood pressure and cholesterol were high. It was a bit of a wake-up call.

I found a 'Couch to 5k' running plan on the internet. It was so easy because you put it on your iPod or phone and it tells you when to walk or run. The first time I went out I couldn't even run between two lamp posts. So I decided I would start by walking.

Gradually I got faster and now I regularly run five miles. I didn't rush things – it took me 18 months to build up to this. I still love food and drink, but I just don't eat huge portions and I have lost three and a half stone. Margaret, my wife, says it's like having a new man!



Peter, mid 60s, Richmond

## What's stopping you?

**Do any of these sound familiar? Try turning the negative into a positive.**

### **I'm too tired.**

Once you start being more active, you'll have more energy in the long term. And you'll feel more relaxed afterwards.

### **I'll feel lonely.**

Talk with your friends and family and see if any of them want to get more active too. Get active together instead.

### **I don't have time.**

Make sure you set aside time in your day so it becomes part of your daily routine.

### **I'm too old.**

You're never too old to get more active. Being active means you're helping to prevent or manage health problems now and in the future.

### **It's expensive.**

Bending and stretching at home are completely free. So are many other lifestyle activities like going for a walk.

### **There's nothing where I live.**

Look at the contact information on page 34 to find out what you can do in your area – the BHF have events and activities across the country. Or find out more at your local council or leisure centre.

### **I might get injured.**

Start slowly and go at your own pace – there's no need to overdo it.

### **I'm embarrassed.**

You don't need to go to a gym, get dressed in sportswear or be active where other people can see you.

### **I'm overweight.**

Being active will help you control your weight. Whatever your weight, it's never too late to start being more active and you can take it at your own pace.

POSI  
~~NEGATIVE~~

## Keep going

**Staying active is a big challenge. There's a lot you can do to help yourself. Here are some things to remember.**

### 1 Do things you enjoy

We're all more likely to do something and stick to it if we enjoy it.

### 2 Remember the positives

Think about how being active will help you feel more energised, relaxed, self-confident and happy.

### 3 Use reminders

Use your calendar, your phone or whatever will help to remind you to be active.

### 4 Be creative and vary your activities

Change the place or time where you do your activity or try something totally new to keep things exciting.

### 5 Be social

Get your friends, family or neighbours involved. You can help each other and be active together.

### 6 Be ready to go

Keep your walking shoes near the door.

### 7 The most important thing is not to give up

If you miss a day – just start again tomorrow. Your health is worth the effort now and in the future.

### Anne's story

“ I started line dancing at a local leisure centre with a pal about 16 years ago and we've been going regularly ever since. We go to two classes a week and I worked out that I am actually dancing for about two and a half hours every week. I start off muffled up in sweaters and in the middle of it I am doing a striptease.

It is wonderful exercise. It's not just the fact that you are moving physically – but you have got to keep very mentally alert to learn the moves. It is great fun and totally non-judgemental. If you do something wrong and end up facing the wrong way we all just have a good laugh about it. It's brilliant fun. I absolutely love it. ”

## Useful contacts and local information

### Walking

#### Paths for all (Scotland)

Phone: 01259 218888  
www.pathsforall.gov.uk

#### Ramblers

Phone: 020 7339 8500  
www.ramblers.org.uk

#### Walk Northern Ireland

Phone: 028 9030 3930  
www.walkni.com

#### Walking for health

Phone: 0300 060 2287  
www.wfh.naturalengland.org.uk

### Cycling

#### Cycling Scotland

Phone: 0141 229 5350  
www.cyclingscotland.org

#### Sustrans

Phone: 0845 113 00 65  
www.sustrans.org.uk  
A charity that helps people to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.

### Swimming

#### British Swimming

Phone: 0871 200 0928  
www.swimming.org  
Go to 'Get involved' section on this website.

#### Scottish Swimming

Phone: 01786 466520  
www.scottishswimming.com

#### Swim Wales (Nofio Cymru)

Phone: 01792 513636  
www.welshasa.co.uk

### Other activities

#### BTCV Green Gym

Phone: 01302 388 883  
www.btcv.org/greengym  
For information on outdoor conservation activities.

#### To find facilities near where you live

#### Active Places

www.activeplaces.com  
A Sport England website.

#### Sport Wales

(Chwaraeon Cymru)  
Phone: 0845 045 0904  
www.sportwales.org.uk

#### Sport Northern Ireland

Phone: 028 90 381222  
www.sportni.net

#### DirectGov

www.direct.gov.uk  
To find a sports club near where you live, look up your local authority website and search for 'sports clubs'.

#### For a list of national governing bodies of sport and sport clubs

#### Sport England

www.sportengland.org

#### Sport Scotland

www.sportscotland.org.uk

#### Sport Wales

www.sportwales.org.uk

#### Sport Northern Ireland

www.sportni.net

### For people with mobility problems or a disability

#### British Wheelchair Sports

Phone: 01296 395 995  
www.wheelpower.org.uk

#### Disability Sport England

Phone: 0161 953 2499  
www.disabilitysport.org.uk

#### Disability Sport Wales (Chwaraeon Anabledd Cymru)

Phone: 0845 846 0021  
www.fdsww.org.uk

#### Extend

Phone: 01582 832760  
www.extend.org.uk  
For local exercise classes for those aged over 60 and for less able people of all ages.

### Inclusive Fitness Initiative

Phone: 0114 2572060  
www.efds.co.uk  
Click on the 'Inclusive Fitness Initiative' link on this website for details of centres, with special equipment and specially trained staff, offering fitness programmes for disabled and less mobile people.

### Thrive

Phone: 0118 988 5688  
www.thrive.org.uk  
A charity which helps people with disabilities to take part in, benefit from and enjoy gardening.

### Your local information

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Visit [better.org.uk/leisure](https://better.org.uk/leisure) to find your local health centre

## Resources from the British Heart Foundation (BHF)

**For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.**

We produce a wide range of resources to help you, your family and friends look after your heart health.

To order any of our heart health resources:

- ♥ **Call** the BHF Orderline on 0870 600 6566
- ♥ **Email** [orderline@bhf.org.uk](mailto:orderline@bhf.org.uk)
- ♥ **Visit** [bhf.org.uk/publications](http://bhf.org.uk/publications)

You can also download many of our publications from our website **[bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk)**

For information about all of our resources, ask for a copy of *Take Heart* (code G5).

## Inspired to make other lifestyle changes?

Being active is only one part of keeping healthy to protect your heart. Eating well, stopping smoking and managing stress are all important too and we have resources available to help you. Order or download the below booklets or visit **[bhf.org.uk/prevention](http://bhf.org.uk/prevention)** for more information and advice.

- ♥ *Eating well* (code G186)
- ♥ *Get active, stay active* (code G12)
- ♥ *Put your heart into walking* (code G26)
- ♥ *Coping with stress* (code G187)
- ♥ *Stop smoking* (code G118)

Our resources and services are free of charge, but we rely on donations to continue our vital work. If you'd like to make a donation, please call our donation hotline on 0300 330 3322 or visit our website at **[bhf.org.uk/donate](http://bhf.org.uk/donate)**. Or, please complete the form at the end of this booklet and send it to us at the address on the back cover.

## Heart Matters

Heart Matters is our free, personalised service to help you live with a healthy heart. Join Heart Matters today to access benefits including *Heart Matters* magazine, a Helpline and an online members' area with recipes, articles and lifestyle tools. Register online at **[bhf.org.uk/heartmatters](http://bhf.org.uk/heartmatters)** or call 0300 330 3300 (calls are charged at a similar cost to 01 or 02 numbers).



## How you can help

Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.



Become a **volunteer** and help run our shops, support local events and fundraising or even campaign for the UK's heart health – there's something for everyone.



**Take part** in one of our events – they're a great way for you to have fun, get fit, and save lives. Choose from cycles, runs, walks and many more.



Join our Heartstart initiative and **learn to save lives** with the skills of emergency life support. Over 2.6 million people already have.



Give to your local BHF shop – it's easy to **donate your unwanted items** to us and help us raise vital funds.



Make a one-off **donation**, set up a direct debit, give in memory or leave a gift in your Will – there's lots of ways to support us.



Shop from the heart with our **online shop** – all profits from the BHF Shop help fund our life-saving work.

For more information visit [bhf.org.uk/youcanhelp](http://bhf.org.uk/youcanhelp) or call 020 7554 0000.

Thank you.

Please send this form to:

**British Heart Foundation**  
Greater London House  
180 Hampstead Road  
London NW1 7AW

**Thank you.**







**British Heart  
Foundation**

Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer.

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.

But so many people still need our help.

From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

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[bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk)