

Know your Risk

Understanding your Risk Factors
for Heart Disease and Stroke



CRÍ

Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

What is a Risk Factor?

A risk factor is anything that raises a person's chance of developing heart disease and stroke. There are two types of risk factors, those you cannot change (non-modifiable) and, thankfully, those you can change (modifiable). The more risk factors you have, the more likely it is that you will develop heart disease and stroke. The good news is that up to 80% of heart disease and stroke could be prevented by controlling your risk factors.

Modifiable risk factors: High Blood Pressure, High Cholesterol, Smoking, Diabetes, Physical Inactivity, Overweight/Obesity and Stress.

Non-Modifiable risk factors: Family History, Ethnicity/Race, Sex and Age.

Know Your Numbers

The first step to reducing your risk factors is to know your numbers.



High Blood Pressure

Known as the silent killer, high blood pressure has no symptoms and if left untreated it can significantly increase your risk of having a stroke or heart attack. The only way you can find out if you have high blood pressure is to have it checked (at least once a year).

The target level for blood pressure is less than 140/90mmHg.



High Cholesterol

The recommended target levels for your cholesterol:

Total Cholesterol	less than 5mmol/L
LDL (bad) Cholesterol	less than 3mmol/L
HDL (good) Cholesterol	greater than 1mmol/L (males) greater than 1.2mmol/L (females)
Triglycerides	less than 1.7mmol/L

If you have diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease or if you have had a stroke, a lower cholesterol target level will be recommended.

Diabetes

Having diabetes means you are three times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease than people who do not have diabetes.

If you have diabetes it is important to keep your sugars well controlled. The following are the recommended target levels for diabetes:

Fasting Plasma Glucose (FPG)	less than 6mmol/L
HbA1c	less than 53mmol/mol

Smoking

There is no safe amount of cigarette smoking; **if you smoke, try to quit...** IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO STOP. Stopping smoking halves your risk for heart disease and stroke. Most smokers want to give up, however getting the right help and support will greatly increase your chances of successfully quitting. Visit www.quit.ie or chat with your GP or local Pharmacist.

Physical Inactivity

Inactive people have twice the risk of developing heart disease and stroke compared with active people. **Be as active as you can be** and reduce time spent sitting when possible.

Overweight and Obesity

Being overweight can lead to an increased risk of developing high blood pressure, diabetes and raised cholesterol. **Losing 5-10% of your body weight can vastly improve your health** and reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke.

Unhealthy Diet

Eating too much salt, sugar or fat in our diet is bad for our heart and increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, as well as leading to weight gain, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. **Eating a healthy balanced diet will reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke**, as well as improving energy levels.

Stress

It is impossible to avoid stress completely, but what you can do is learn how to manage stress. This will help to keep your heart healthy and improve your overall feeling of wellbeing.

Learn more: www.croi.ie



For more health information or to support the work at Croí, the Heart & Stroke Charity, please visit our website at **www.croi.ie**.

Croí, the Heart & Stroke Charity

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