

# *A Woman's Heart*



*and how to look after it*

A magazine  
for women  
produced by the  
Irish Heart  
Foundation

# Mary's Heart

Singer, songwriter Mary Black was a prime mover behind 'A Woman's Heart', the all-female album which became one of Ireland's largest selling albums ever.

"While the title song was about a broken heart, a woman's heart for me symbolises women's strong hearts, the way women pull together and give and get a lot from each other. Of course, men too can be compassionate, but women understand each other in a particular way. So this year's Irish Heart Week theme has a special meaning for me, and I am very pleased to be associated with the Irish Heart Foundation's campaign to get us all thinking about how we can reduce the risk of heart disease among women and lead healthy, productive lives."

Like many women these days, Mary has to manage a number of roles. "We have three children, aged 21, 17 and 13. I couldn't manage without the support of my husband, or without my mother and family when the children were younger. While it's hard to be away from them on tour, this is balanced with the joy and satisfaction I get from what I do, which gives me something to give back to the family.

"Being healthy is very important. I try to walk half an hour with the dog every day at home. Walking when on tour is a lovely way of seeing a new city. I gave up smoking many years ago, one of the hardest and best things I ever did. I try to eat healthily - lots of vegetables and some fruit every day. My life can be stressful, it's not enough just to be a singer, it's all about how you present yourself. Being fit and having the necessary energy to do the job are vital in helping me look and perform well. Before a tour, I would try to get fit and into good shape by going to the gym, as well as walking.

"I relax by spending time in our holiday home in west Kerry. I paint a bit, I'm only a dabbler really, but get a lot of pleasure from it. I love to listen to music, naturally and I also enjoy reading when I've the time to do it."



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This magazine offers general information and helpful guidelines on positive living for women of all ages. The information and advice is equally relevant for those who have recovered from a heart attack or after heart surgery. However if you have been given specific advice by your doctor or specialist, please check with him or her before making any changes.

The Irish Heart Foundation thanks in particular: Mary Black; all those women who shared their 'heart' stories in this magazine; Cardiac Rehabilitation colleagues Irene Byrne, Mater Hospital, Janis Stephenson and Mary Synnott, Wexford General Hospital; and Kathleen Griffin, Midland Health Board and Susanne Leech, North Eastern Health Board.

The Irish Heart Foundation's Council on Women and Heart Disease provided specialist input and guidance on producing this resource for Irish Heart Week 2002. Members include Dr Kate McGarry, (Chair) Consultant Physician, Our Lady's Hospital, Navan; Dr Claire McNicholas, GP; Dr Emer Shelley, Heart Health Advisor, Department of Health and Children; Dr Moira Lonergan, Research Fellow, Irish Cardiac Surgery Register; Dr Mary Codd, Clinical Epidemiologist and Special Advisor, Department of Health and Children; Dr Eilis McGovern, Consultant Cardio-Thoracic Surgeon, St James's' Hospital; Dr Mark Laher, Consultant Physician, Blackrock Clinic; Dr Vincent Maher, Consultant Cardiologist, Tallaght Hospital and Medical Director, Irish Heart Foundation.

# A WOMAN'S HEART

If you were asked to imagine a typical heart attack candidate, you would probably picture a high-flying stressed out man. But you would be only half right. Women suffer from heart disease too.

It is coronary heart disease not breast cancer which is the most common cause of death for women in Ireland, a statistic which may come as a surprise to many women who would regard heart disease as a male illness.

In fact, almost as many women die each year from heart disease as men. In 2001, just under 6,000 women died from diseases of the heart and circulatory system and just over 6,000 men.

There is now increased recognition that accurate information about women and heart disease needs to be more available for all of us - medical profession, government services and the general public alike.

**"Many women suffering from heart disease are failing to receive the same standard of treatment as men because it still tends to be seen as a male disease", says Doctor Eilis McGovern, Heart Surgeon, St. James's Hospital. "There is a great need to strengthen the public health message that for women as well as men, heart disease is a reality in Ireland today," she says.**



- ♥ **diabetes** - increases rate of heart disease among women threefold and removes their protection in the pre-menopausal years.

## GOOD NEWS

There is good news. Rates of heart disease have been dropping steadily in the population. This is due to changes in lifestyle and better diagnosis and treatment. Today a higher proportion of people who have a heart attack survive to reach hospital. However, this also means we have growing numbers of people with diagnosed heart disease in the community.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Women can help themselves to heart health:

- ♥ have a regular check up, including a blood pressure and cholesterol check which are quick and painless and available from your family doctor
- ♥ eat more fruit and vegetables and less fat
- ♥ be physically active every day
- ♥ stop smoking
- ♥ be a healthy weight
- ♥ if approaching the menopause, find out about the many approaches that can be helpful in alleviating any symptoms
- ♥ find out about your family history and take steps to reduce your risk levels.

## WOMEN AT RISK

Certain well recognised factors place women at risk of coronary heart disease.

These include:

- ♥ **age** - as women get older, their risk of heart disease increases and for many women this coincides with menopause
- ♥ **smoking** - carbon monoxide and nicotine in tobacco smoke narrows and damages blood vessels leading to heart disease
- ♥ **high cholesterol**
- ♥ **high blood pressure**
- ♥ **inactivity** - being active helps to maintain heart and lung fitness
- ♥ **family history** - genetic conditions which affect heart health can run in families

**"Women need to realise that they are vulnerable to heart disease and to take symptoms seriously.**

**Because women tend to dismiss early symptoms, put it down to something else, they tend to go for help quite late.**

**So we need to be educated about the importance of getting accurate and speedy medical advice and services," says Doctor Eilis McGovern.**

# WOMEN GET HEART DISEASE TOO

While awareness is now improving that heart disease is not just a male problem, there is still considerable benefit to women who inform themselves and take more responsibility for their own heart health.

## TESTING TIMES

There are good reasons traditionally for regarding heart disease as a man's issue.

- ♥ Heart disease very often only surfaces in women around the time of the menopause
- ♥ A woman feeling unwell may not suspect heart problems and, therefore does nothing about it
- ♥ Even when she does go to her doctor, the heart problems may be misdiagnosed as indigestion, stress or high blood pressure. This is partly because women's symptoms are often vague and diffuse
- ♥ Heart disease is more difficult to diagnose in women than in men, as men are more likely to present with so-called classic symptoms - such as chest pain and pain in upper arm
- ♥ Women's symptoms may include pain in their side and back and suffer from nausea and vomiting
- ♥ An ECG or stress test which can accurately diagnose male disease may not diagnose female heart disease
- ♥ Tests may give false information and more tests may be necessary creating more delay in women getting treatment.

## ALL IN THE FAMILY

Make it your business to learn what risk factors you have for heart disease. If a parent or sibling has suffered from heart problems, take this seriously, and take steps to make your lifestyle more heart friendly. Have a blood pressure and cholesterol check at your local GP surgery.

## HAVE A CHECK UP

Early warning of high blood pressure, raised cholesterol or diabetes may help you prevent and reduce the effects of heart disease.

A complete check up will include:

- ♥ taking your lifestyle and medical history
- ♥ blood pressure check
- ♥ cholesterol check
- ♥ blood and urine test for diabetes
- ♥ physical examination
- ♥ ECG to record heartbeat

The physical examination includes a check for any abnormalities. Height, weight and frame size will be measured.

General questions about your eating, drinking, physical activity and smoking habits will help you look at your life objectively and identify risk factors.

Health check ups are free to medical card holders as part of a consultation when particular symptoms are present or suspected. Free preventive health screening is not available, though VHI or BUPA policy holders may qualify. The Irish Heart Foundation recommends that Irish men and women should have a general check up every five years, although this may vary depending on family history or other problems, so it is best to keep in regular contact with your family doctor.



## BLOOD PRESSURE BLUES

Measuring your blood pressure is simple, painless and gives instant results. High blood pressure can put a strain on the heart and arteries and may need to be managed with medication and some lifestyle changes.

### For healthy blood pressure

- ➔ try to stop smoking
- ➔ aim for a healthy weight
- ➔ eat more fruit and vegetables and less salt
- ➔ go easy on alcohol
- ➔ be physically active every day
- ➔ take time to relax, share your worries, listen to music or walk off your tensions

## CHOLESTEROL CHECK

Cholesterol is a soft, fatty or waxy substance which the body needs to produce some vitamins, hormones and to help digestion. However, as saturated (hard) fats convert to cholesterol in the body, taking in too many fatty foods results in fatty deposits which clog and narrow the arteries leading to heart problems. There can also be a family disposition to high cholesterol.

Cholesterol levels are measured by analysing a blood sample. Depending on the results, a change in diet, medication or more physical activity may be suggested.

## Gardening as therapy

Angela Driscoll, a psychotherapist in her early sixties lives alone in the midst of glorious scenery at Annamoe, Co Wicklow. Her family history, demanding job and personal awareness means that she is health conscious. "My father died of a heart attack, my mother lost a child due to toxemia and my brother suffers from angina and has had a heart bypass.

I have blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly and found recently that my blood pressure was up slightly, due to some anxiety. Cutting out salt brought it down."

Physical symptoms during the menopause - of dizziness, night sweats, dry eye sockets - led Angela to go to her GP to discuss hormone replacement therapy. With HRT, her symptoms disappeared and memory loss problems, which can affect some women at this time, cleared up. HRT has provided a bonus in contributing to healthy bones, which was confirmed by a recent bone density scan.

Angela reflects on her current lifestyle. "I stopped smoking cigarettes when I was expecting my eldest daughter many years ago, then later switched to small cigars and gave up permanently at age 50 - which had a positive effect. I am conscious of what fat I eat, use a low fat spread during the week and butter as a treat at weekends. I could lose half a stone, but I am comfortable with how I am. I drink a glass of wine regularly which I believe is good for the heart. Food is a great pleasure, I love cooking for friends and am a creative cook.

"I visit the gym once a week, have a work out, take part in an exercise class and swim in the pool. I like walking and took up gardening four years ago - a new love. Gardening is physically tough and pushes me to new places, so it helps build up endurance and stamina. It is emotionally therapeutic. When I'm gardening, the chattering in my head is stilled, and I find I am much more reflective, so it offers a focus for meditation as well.

"I don't think women have a good track record of valuing ourselves sufficiently. We have inherited a

## For healthy cholesterol

- follow the Food Pyramid
- eat lots of whole grain breads, cereals, rice and pasta
- choose fruit and vegetables regularly
- eat small portions of lean meat, fish and poultry
- switch to low fat dairy products
- include peas, beans and lentils
- be physically active.

culture of self-sacrifice and putting others first.

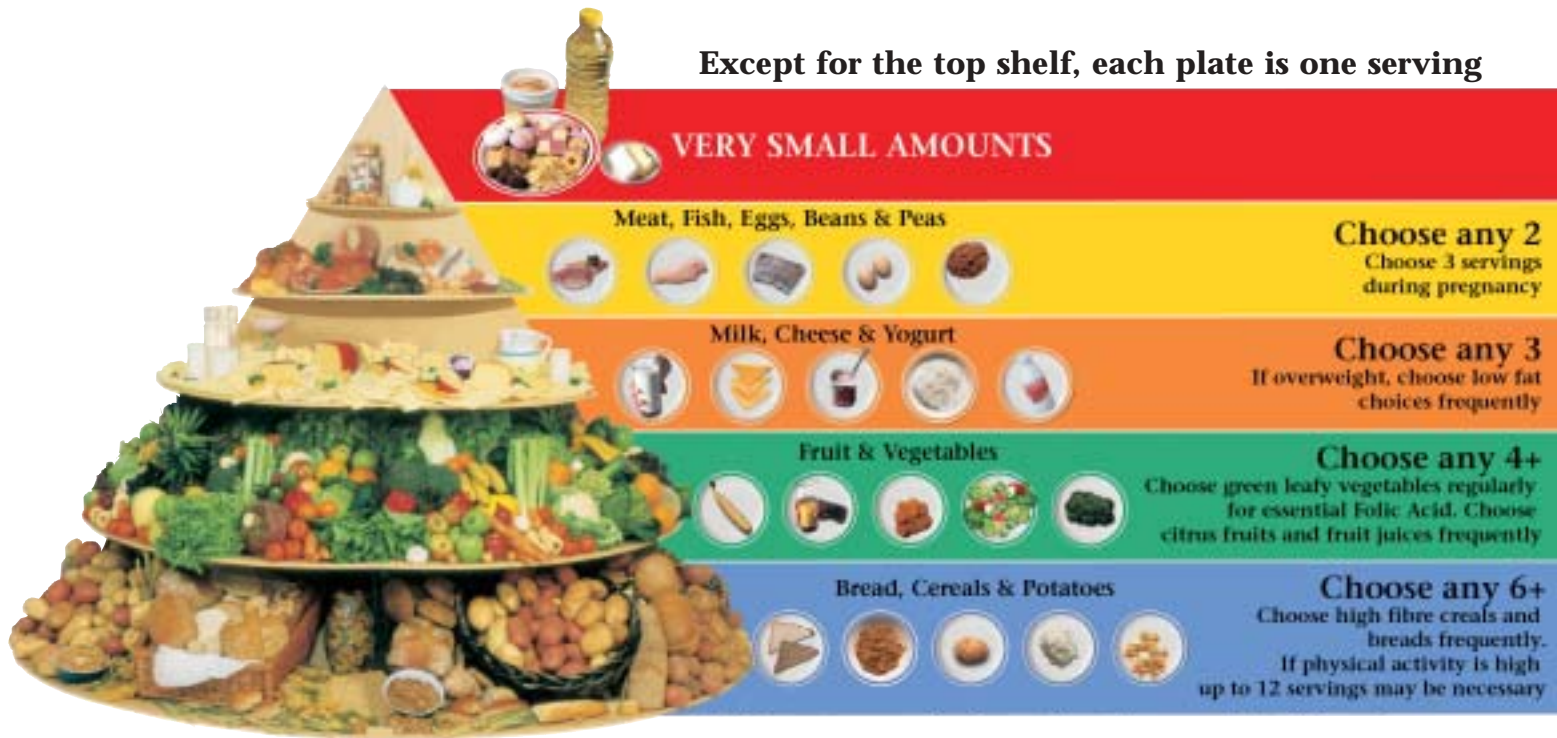
"This is changing, and I think the more good quality information on health promotion and personal development the better.

Ageing is difficult for us all, but for women, signifying as it does the end of fertility, it can be very tough. Living alone has its own struggle. However, the effort is worth it. I am coming to see this time of my life as a very rich time, and a new stage of growth."



# Healthy Food Choices

Following the Food Pyramid is vital for Heart Health



One of the best ways you can take care of your heart is to plan family food around the Food Pyramid.

- ♥ choose from each shelf each day to ensure a balanced diet
- ♥ select in the suggested proportions to guarantee a healthy diet
- ♥ keep the Pyramid in mind when peckish to give a wide choice of foods
- ♥ don't overlook the dairy shelf - three portions a day of milk, cheese or yoghurt gives you the calcium and vitamins you need - particularly important for women for strong bones and teeth - low fat dairy products contain just as much calcium as full fat products
- ♥ remember there is no such thing as a good or a bad food - it's how you eat over time that establishes your pattern of eating

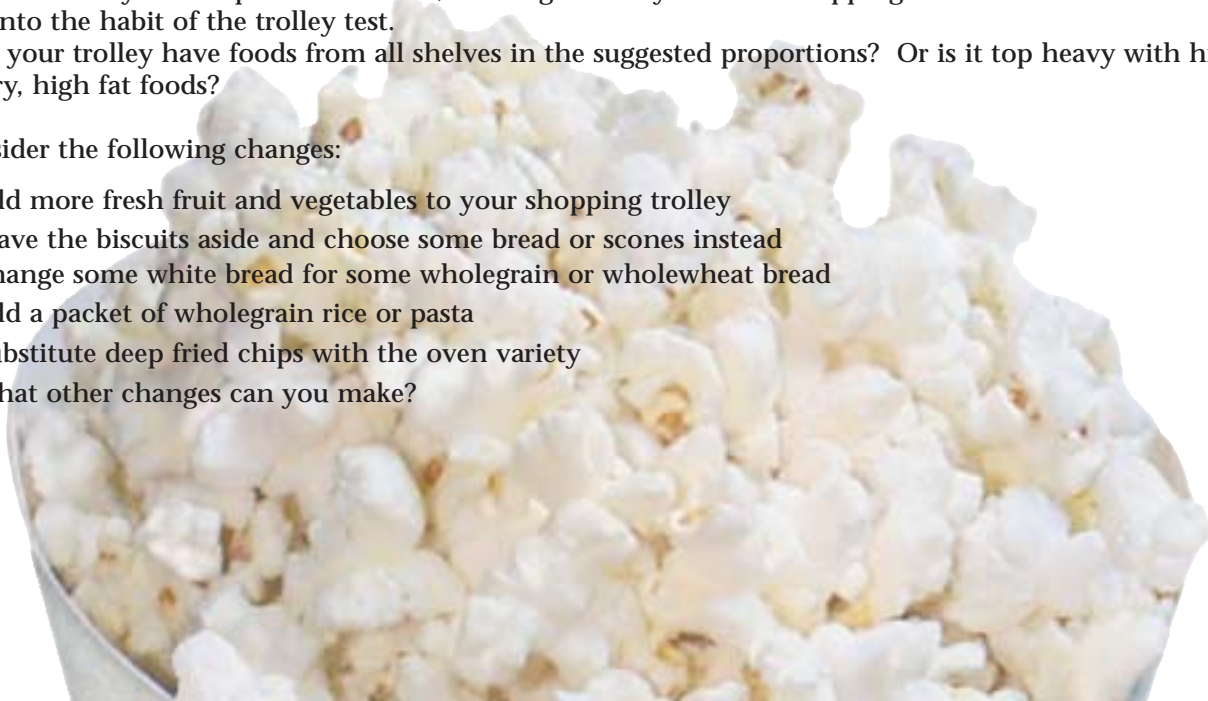
## Do the Trolley Test

Link your shopping list with the Food Pyramid and plan meals accordingly.  
Pin the Food Pyramid up in the kitchen, or bring it with you when shopping.  
Get into the habit of the trolley test.

Does your trolley have foods from all shelves in the suggested proportions? Or is it top heavy with high sugary, high fat foods?

Consider the following changes:

- ♥ add more fresh fruit and vegetables to your shopping trolley
- ♥ leave the biscuits aside and choose some bread or scones instead
- ♥ change some white bread for some wholegrain or wholewheat bread
- ♥ add a packet of wholegrain rice or pasta
- ♥ substitute deep fried chips with the oven variety
- ♥ what other changes can you make?



## IF YOU COULD MAKE ONLY ONE CHANGE....

- ♥ Grill, bake or stir fry instead of frying.
- ♥ If frying, dry fry, or use an oil spray to coat the pan surface very sparingly
- ♥ Choose lean meat, chicken and fish. Trim any visible fat off meat; remove chicken skin



## A Change of Heart

You probably don't need to make huge changes to eat more healthily. A number of small changes over time is what counts.

For example:

- ♥ have a slice of wholemeal bread/toast, bowl of porridge or high fibre cereal at breakfast rather than just a rushed cuppa
- ♥ choose a scone, cracker or piece of fruit mid-morning in preference to a muffin or Danish
- ♥ add some salad or vegetables to your lunchtime sandwich - try combinations of - lettuce, sliced red pepper, tomato, onion, scallion
- ♥ snack on popcorn, diet yoghurt, brown or fruit scone, packet of sultanas, piece of fruit



## Achieve a Healthy Weight - Women Share Their Success

- Anne: "Be positive! I've learned that the only way to lose weight and keep it off is by changing eating habits and being physically active"
- Mary: "Set realistic goals! It took me five years to put on my extra weight but I wanted to lose it in a few weeks! Aim for 1lb each week - that's 1 stone in 14 weeks"
- Jane: "I found it really helpful to write down what I ate at each meal and for snacks and drinks. It got me focused and I felt I was in control. Adding up how much activity I had each day also helped"
- Maureen: "I've tried lots of fad diets and expensive diets but I always put the weight back on. Eventually I found that using the Food Pyramid as a guide and being strict on portion sizes, as well as being active, was the solution".
- Christine: "Adding fruit and vegetables to all my meals and snacks really helped me feel satisfied and never hungry".
- Kate: "I really watched my fat intake. I used very little fat or oil in cooking (see above for cooking tips) and chose lean meat, chicken and fish and low fat choices in spreads, milks and yoghurts. I wasn't fooled by low fat high sugar bars and biscuits, they are still high in calories"
- Eileen: "Healthy eating and getting more active really worked for me. I skipped a half hour TV every evening and had a brisk walk instead. It's now my time out for myself and I often walk as much as 60 minutes for the sheer enjoyment. I've really firmed up and reached a healthy weight.
- Laura: "I've learned not to use food as a reward or as a way of coping with stress. Now I reward myself with flowers, a walk, swim or a magazine instead.

# LITTLE CHANGES MAKE BIG DIFFERENCES

Three years ago Eileen Govern from Navan, Co Meath, the mother of four children with two sons still living at home, was overweight and had little energy. Eileen was invited to join a leadership training course given by the North Eastern Health Board which prepared her to run a healthy eating course round the region. 'Cook It' is a six week programme for men, women and children demonstrating healthy eating on a budget. "On the first week, we have a dietitian who explains about healthy eating and the Food Pyramid. Then participants choose the recipes they want to learn from the 'Cook It' cookbook, and we supply the money for the ingredients. Along the way, Eileen became her own best pupil. "One of the first things I did was to get rid of the deep fat fryer. Now if the boys want chips, we have low fat oven chips, and we have limited the number of take-aways. Secondly, I realised the hidden sugars in so many different foods. My shopping trolley then would have had a lot of fatty foods, biscuits and packets."



These days her trolley looks quite different. "I have porridge for breakfast and the boys have Corn Flakes or Weetabix, I have one slice of brown toast, they don't like brown and still have white. For lunch in winter I have a bowl of home made soup, people are surprised how simple it is to make their own, and a brown roll filled with chicken or turkey and salad. The boys make their own sandwiches before they leave for work. At night I would have a small portion of fish or chicken, potatoes, rice or pasta and fill up the plate with vegetables. It used to be the opposite, a large amount of meat and very few vegetables, but now the proportions are reversed. The boys eat fish and chicken and they would have more red meat than I have. We have always loved cabbage and we continue to have a lot of that, I find packets of frozen mixed vegetables are great value. I've never had a sweet tooth, and if they're having a dessert, it would probably be rice or fruit.

"I never used to have fruit in the house. Now I buy oranges, apples, bananas and pears every week, and we are all eating more fruit. The changes happened naturally, I gradually began to change the way I shopped and cooked. My sons accepted the changes

and adapted with me. I explained what I was doing and why, particularly when I got rid of the deep fat fryer. As a result I have lost a stone, I've much more energy and now walk for pleasure several times a week. One of the things people learn on the course is that eating well doesn't cost more. In fact, I have saved money because I am buying less so called 'convenience foods'.

"Women as wives and mothers have a big influence on the eating habits of the household which can affect the health and weight of husbands, partners and children. Because I have changed my eating habits, the whole family has changed theirs.

Many small changes over time make a difference. It doesn't have to be a big leap, I think most people find it easier to make a number of small changes and they are more likely to keep these up as well."

## COOKING IT HEALTHILY YOURSELF

'Cook It' is one of a number of healthy eating courses run by health boards round the country. There may be one in your area so check with your local health board (see back page). Your local VEC may offer day or evening classes in healthy eating or family cooking on a budget.

**For ideas for recipes and easy to prepare meals contact:**

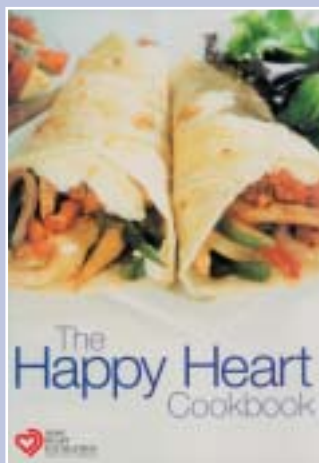
**Community dietetic service in your local Health Board – see back page**

**The Irish Heart Foundation, Tel. 6685001 or website: [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)**

**Bord Glas Tel. 676 3567 [www.bordglas.ie](http://www.bordglas.ie)**

**Bord Bia Tel. 668 5155 [www.bordbia.ie](http://www.bordbia.ie)**

**Bord Iascaigh Mhara Tel. 2144100 [www.bim.ie](http://www.bim.ie)**



Look out for the Irish Heart Foundation's Happy Heart Cookbook, available from all leading bookstores around the country  
Price € 12.99

# MANAGE YOUR STRESS

Stress is often described as a mismatch between the demands of work, family and living and of coping with these demands.

Stress can mean different things to different people. Stress can be both positive – when it motivates us to get something done – or negative when we have too many demands and constantly feel under pressure.

Chronic or constant stress is bad for your heart. It produces hormones in the blood which, over time, damage the arteries and heart muscle and lead to high blood pressure which puts a strain on your heart.

Also, if you are stressed, you are more likely to drink more coffee or alcohol, smoke more cigarettes and take less time to be active, all of which contribute to heart problems.

## What will help you cope better with stress?

1. **Tackle the problem** - there may be something you can do to change the stressful situation.
2. **Consider accepting it** - the evocation to 'help us change the things we can and accept those we can't' may be relevant.
3. **Work it off** - physical activity produces the body's own happy hormones called endorphins which give the feel-good factor after exercise.
4. **Talk it over** - sharing a problem with someone who will listen does help.
5. **Take care of yourself** - get enough sleep, drink alcohol in moderation, and eat healthily - lots more fruit and vegetables and less fatty foods.
6. Look at how you **manage your time**
  - prioritise • make lists • plan ahead
  - learn to say 'no' • take one thing at a time
  - reward yourself for getting things done.
7. **Develop a hobby** - find time for 'you', painting and writing are wonderful ways of letting things go.
8. **Learn to relax** - read for pleasure, make time for your favourite television programme, listen to music, hire out a video, go to the cinema or theatre, enjoy a warm bath, have a regular massage, laugh, sing around the house.



## Breathe away your stress



The way we breathe often reflects our state of mind and emotions. We often breathe shallowly when we are stressed, while slower, deeper breathing can help to calm us down. This type of breathing is called abdominal breathing and you can learn the technique. Here's how.

1. Sit in a comfortable position with a straight supported back and both feet firmly on the ground.
2. Close your eyes. Place your left hand on your abdomen and your right hand on your chest.
3. Breathing normally, notice which hand moves as you breathe. It will probably be the hand on your chest.
4. Consciously now, slowly count from 1 to 4 as you inhale through your nose.
5. Pause for 2 counts.
6. Then open your mouth and mentally count from 1 to 6 as you exhale through your mouth.
7. As you breathe in this way, try to shift most of the movement towards your lower hand.
8. Allow your abdomen push your hand out as you inhale and pull your abdomen in, letting your hand fall or move as you exhale.
9. After several minutes of this slow, rhythmic breathing, let your hands move slowly to your sides, as your abdomen continues to move freely in and out with each breath.
10. Slowly open your eyes and sit quietly for a little while.

*This method of breathing is excellent for emotional calming. Practice daily for best effect. It will take about 10 weeks of daily practice before you become used to it and begin to experience its physical and emotional benefits. Keep trying, and you will realise you are better equipped to deal with potentially stressful situations.*

# GET MORE ACTIVE

Physical activity brings so many benefits for your heart and your health, as well as a sense of well-being, as these two women testify.

The good news....

- ♥ It only takes a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity each day to enjoy these benefits
- ♥ Physical activity can vary from leisure activities such as walking or dancing to more routine tasks such as cleaning the house or gardening.
- ♥ Activities can be spread over 1, 2 or 3 shorter sessions e.g. 2 x 10 minutes walking and 1 x 20 minutes of gardening.

## WALKING BACK TO HEALTHINESS

Maura Moraghan has a grown up family, and like many women she had been too busy in her early years of motherhood to take much time for herself. She began walking seven years ago, pleased to have found a way to improve her health, shape and fitness. "At the beginning, the walks were much shorter and the pace was much slower" she says. "I didn't have a regular time and sometimes found it hard to fit in the walk. Then I decided to walk first thing in the morning and stick to it - that made a big difference".

Walking became a way of life. In hail, rain or storm, Maura was out there, walking briskly, occasionally with a friend or friends, but usually on her own. Pace and distance increased considerably. She lost two stone in weight and has kept most of it off. She joined Weight Watchers round about the time she started walking and she found her commitment to one strengthened her commitment to the other - especially as she began to see results. Maura is particularly proud of her achievement this summer when she walked the Woman's Marathon in 1 hr 53 minutes.



Her new found interest in walking and fitness prompted her to stop smoking and she has kept to her resolve. She feels and looks really well: "I have much more energy and since I began walking, even though I am out in all weathers I never get a cold. I feel better, I look better, I have more confidence. Walking on your own in the morning gives a mental space, a time to think and plan. I feel I can affirm myself today, for doing something positive for myself which I also enjoy."

## MORE TO GIVE

Mary Murphy from Bishopstown, Co Cork has five children aged 25 to 12 and says finding time for herself can be difficult. However, she has good reasons to take care of her heart health. "My father died of a heart attack at age 52, the age I am now, and my mother, aged 88, is well, but has been on blood pressure tablets since her early sixties.

"I had a bone density scan two years ago and discovered I had osteopenia, a forerunner of osteoporosis. My GP referred me to a programme in a local gym.

The programme included visiting the gym and walking, both good exercise for weight bearing joints, as well as a regular swim. Now two years later, she has continued a regular brisk walk, including a 45 minute walk with her husband each weekend. She swims twice a week at the local health club and has graduated from one length to 25 lengths of the pool. "The physical activity has been very good, I feel both more energetic and more relaxed, and now I'm hoping to take up yoga again. It's something I also come back to both for flexibility and relaxation. It has also helped keep my blood pressure down. I never smoked. I went on HRT some years ago and tried various different combinations but nothing agreed with me. Now I have gone down the homeopathic route for symptom relief and even after a few months on a homeopathic remedy, I feel very well. It can be hard for women with families to find time for themselves, and it needs a lot of discipline, but it is worth doing, as you have more to give to everyone, including yourself."

## What are the health benefits?

- Keeps your heart strong
- Helps manage your weight
- Helps to keep blood pressure down
- Helps keep a healthy cholesterol level
- Strengthens muscles and bones
- Helps recovery after heart attack
- Helps relieve stress

## Walk at a hearty pace

If walking is your preferred activity you should aim to walk 3km or 1.8 miles at a hearty pace on most days of the week. A 3 km (1.8 miles) walk should take 30-40 mins. to complete.

### A hearty pace...

- ♥ causes your heart to beat a little faster
- ♥ makes you breathe deeper and faster but not so that you're out of breath
- ♥ brings a little sweat to your brow



## Slí na Sláinte- Path to Health

Recognise this sign? It's one of literally hundreds around the country, marking a Slí na Sláinte, a Path to Health. These Slí routes are walking routes developed and approved by the Irish Heart Foundation to encourage walking for pleasure and good health.

You'll find Slí routes in every county in Ireland, in urban as well as rural settings, each route marked at 1km intervals so you know how far you've travelled. The signposts aren't numbered, so you can start and finish wherever you want. Slí routes are designed to provide a safe, accessible and enjoyable outlet for walkers of all ages and they currently form a network of 109 Paths to Health around the country.

(1 kilometre equals 0.62 miles, a little over half a mile)

## SAFELY ON THE MOVE

**Getting Started:** Talk to your doctor before starting a new physical activity or routine.

**Choose well:** Choose an activity or activities you enjoy - you're far more likely to stick to it.

**Know your options:** Consider brisk walking, swimming, dancing, or exercise classes with a qualified leader. (A good class will include activities to improve your aerobic fitness, flexibility, strength and balance/co-ordination)

### How often, how much, how long?

from **Couch Potato** →

Start with two, short (5-10 mins) bouts of easy activity, per week. *Don't push yourself!*

Put more physical effort into routine activities such as walking, walking up stairs or cleaning the house. to..... → **Modest Mover**

Increase to three/four 10-15 mins bouts of physical activity at a moderate intensity. *Push yourself a little - but not too far!*

to..... → **Hearty Human**

Aim to be active for an accumulated total of 30 or more minutes every day. You can break this into several short bouts (e.g. 10 mins walking, 15 mins gardening, 8 mins stretching).

**Listen to your Body:** Never push your body to a high intensity - you should always be able to carry on a conversation during activity. Stop immediately if you feel unwell or in pain. Consult your doctor if your symptoms remain or return.

## Let's Go Walking...



# IN OUR PRIME

In the past, men grew old and distinguished, and women grew old - and invisible. These days women are living longer, looking and feeling great, and continuing to enjoy a variety of life choices which can include family, grandchildren, career, friends, hobbies, sports and social life.

## END OF AN ERA

Some women view menopause and the loss of their monthly period with sadness, seeing it as the end of their reproductive lives. The physical symptoms associated with the menopause are due to a gradual decline in the levels of the hormone oestrogen in our body. These can include:

- hot flushes**
- sweating**
- sleeplessness**
- dizziness and palpitations**
- dryness in the vagina**

Three in four women experience hot flushes, and half of these have relatively mild symptoms. Women can also experience loss of energy, tiredness, joint and muscle pain, thinning hair.

Psychological symptoms can include feelings of general sadness, restlessness, anxiety, mood swings. Other women report failing memory and difficulty with decision-making.

## HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT)

Because some of the symptoms of the menopause are caused by falling oestrogen levels, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) which replaces oestrogen can have beneficial effects. The treatment now most often given is a combination of oestrogen and progestogen and is available in the form of pills, creams, patches and implants.

HRT gives relief of physical symptoms such as:

- hot flushes, insomnia and vaginal dryness
- enhances verbal skills
- helps reduce feelings of tiredness
- can improve symptoms of psychological upset.

### Women on the Verge of HRT

In spite of some proven benefits of HRT, relatively few women still take HRT and many take it for quite short periods. "The reasons can be very personal, many women don't want to medicalise themselves or don't want to be taking more chemicals into their body," says GP, Doctor Claire McNicholas, "also some women experience side effects from HRT, such as weight gain and mood swings, rather like those of PMT."



### HRT for Me?

HRT may not be suitable for you if you have a history of:

- fibroids and endometriosis
- diabetes, liver or gallbladder disease or gallstones
- blood clots in the veins or lungs
- family history of breast cancer

If in doubt, consult your doctor, and discuss the balance of risk and benefits which will help you make your decision. In considering HRT, it is also relevant to look at HRT and bone health.

### HRT and Healthy Bones

Osteoporosis is a thinning of the bone leading to fractures, deformity and pain. Factors influencing the development of bone disease include family genetics, age at puberty, exercise levels, nutrition and calcium intake in childhood. During your reproductive life, oestrogen plays a crucial role in acquiring and maintaining maximum bone density.

Oestrogen deficiency is now known to be the main cause of osteoporosis after menopause. Bone density can be measured using a special type of X-ray called the DEXA scan. After 10 years of HRT, fracture risk is estimated to be reduced by 50-60%, which is a reason for considering HRT. However, there are risks associated with long term use of HRT, which should be discussed with your doctor.

Help yourself to healthy bones by:

- taking three portions of dairy products - milk, cheese or yoghurt every day
- drink milk with added calcium
- get out and get active each day

### HRT and Heart Disease

The risk of heart disease in women increases dramatically after menopause. The link between heart disease and falling levels of oestrogen continues to be debated and studied further.

At present, Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is not prescribed for the prevention or protection against heart disease and is not licensed for this use in Ireland. HRT is mainly prescribed for the relief of symptoms of menopause and for use in the short term.

## BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

Many commentators believe that stress and lifestyle are contributing crucially to heart disease these days. "The causes of heart disease are multifactorial", says Doctor Claire McNicholas. With regard to lifestyle, they include lack of exercise and physical activity and a sedentary lifestyle, cigarette smoking, high fat diet, excess alcohol and there is a strong genetic component.

So help yourself to a healthy heart

- ♥ **be active every day**
- ♥ **eat less fat and more fruit and vegetables**
- ♥ **stop smoking**
- ♥ **relax and enjoy life**

## THE COMPLEMENTARY ROUTE

Many women today choose complementary therapies to help cope with the menopause. These include

- ♥ **aromatherapy massage**
- ♥ **breathing exercises**
- ♥ **homeopathic remedies**
- ♥ **herbal medicine**
- ♥ **reflexology**
- ♥ **relaxation techniques**
- ♥ **meditation**

While the effectiveness of many such therapies may not have the evidence-base of conventional medicine, many women who take the complementary route report a decrease in symptoms and increase in well-being.

It is also recognised that the presence of a supportive home and work environment can ease negative menopausal symptoms and promote feelings of well-being.

## SOME POPULAR THERAPIES

### Aromatherapy

Aromatic plant oils, like our hormones, have therapeutic effects and are capable of being massaged through the skin to the bloodstream. Many oil blends help with physical and/or emotional menopausal problems. These include rose, geranium, lavender, basil, sage, thyme, clary sage, bergamot, jasmine, rosemary, lemon and many, more.

### Massage

Whole body, back, neck/shoulders or face massage act on the body organs by easing out physical tension, unblocking energy channels and helping blood and lymph flow. Going for a regular massage may help you relax, release negative tension and manage stress.

## Relaxation

Stress puts the body in fight or flight mode, which causes strain and increased effort. Relaxing the body allows it to rest and work more effectively. Relaxation includes exercise, correct posture, deep breathing and sleep. In menopause, relaxation improves the discomfort of hot flushes, helps release anxiety and lessen tension and depression. There are many easily managed methods of relaxation, (see abdominal breathing technique on page 9) and try the following for a quick relaxation therapy

- ♥ stretch your whole body, relax it
- ♥ tense the whole body, relax it
- ♥ breathe in and exhale using a long sighing-out breath
- ♥ get into the habit of checking your body and release any points of tension - neck, shoulders, tummy, forehead, chest, mouth

## Yoga



Hatha yoga as practised in the west is a series of gentle stretching and breathing exercises aimed to unify body and mind in a quest for inner peace. Yoga during menopause can help with stress-related symptoms and improve general joint suppleness.

## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF - IN SAFETY

1. Check that the alternative therapist you use is a member of a professional body.
2. Avoid someone who makes unrealistic claims - many alternative therapies take time to work as they depend on the body's own natural healing properties.
3. Family pharmacists and health food shops may also be a source of advice and information regarding alternative therapies.



# IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO **STOP**

Many people feel there is no point in stopping smoking as they have damaged their bodies too much already. **Not true.**

-  **20 minutes after you stop smoking** a cigarette, your blood pressure and pulse rate return to normal.
-  **Eight hours later** oxygen levels are normal.
-  **One day later** carbon monoxide has been eliminated from your body and your lungs begin to clear of mucous and other smoking debris.
-  **By day two** there will be no nicotine in your body, taste and smell is improving.
-  **Three days after** stopping for good, breathing is easier and energy levels increase.
-  **Over the next three months** your circulation improves.
-  **Within nine months** coughs, wheezes and breathing problems should be greatly reduced as your lung function increases by 10%.
-  **Five years later** your risk of heart attack is halved.
-  **Ten years after** you stop smoking your risk of lung cancer has been halved, and your risk of heart disease is the same as if you had never smoked.



**Quitting smoking is the best step you can take for your heart**  
**With a little help from your friends**



For advice, support and an Advice Kit to help you quit smoking call:  
The IRISH CANCER SOCIETY  
**QUITLINE**  
**1850 201 203**  
9.30am - 4.30pm Monday to Friday and talk to a stop smoking counsellor.

Contact your  
**Local Health Board**  
(see back page),  
**G.P., Health Centre or**  
**Pharmacist who may know of**  
**a smoking cessation support**  
**group meeting in your area.**

# HAPPY TO HAVE STOPPED

Wendy Hughes from Longford, began smoking at 15 just like her friends and almost every member of her family. Forty years later, Wendy was still smoking but by now the habit had taken its toll. "Normally it was 20 a day, but if I was worried about something I'd have more. By the time I gave them up, I was coughing and retching constantly and was very worried that one day I would cough up blood. My chest was very tight but I was too frightened to go to the doctor because I thought he would tell me something was very wrong.

"I had no energy and couldn't do housework without needing to sit down and my garden was completely neglected because I couldn't bend or pull up weeds. Even holding a conversation was an effort and I was breathless a lot of the time.

Wendy had stopped successfully for five years, gaining weight in the process, and then relapsed. Then in August 2001, she heard of a smoking cessation support group being facilitated by the Midland Health Board and went along. "Our carbon monoxide levels were measured by blowing into an instrument, and holding your breath for 15 seconds. It was such a struggle to hold my breath, and I was upset at the reading."

She had her last cigarette the second week she attended the group. "I expected a battle, but didn't find it as hard as I thought. I was helped by the fact that I had made up my mind to stop, I knew I had to. Also, if I felt like a cigarette, the thought of having to say 'I broke it' to the group was a deterrent. I would never have been able to stop on my own, but doing it with the group made all the difference and I had great encouragement from the family."



Even though she stopped smoking, Wendy continued to attend the group. "I loved the socialisation. There was no pressure, just encouragement and motivation. At eight weeks, she found her coughing had lessened, her chest was looser and she began to feel better." Now, fifteen months later, Wendy considers herself a firm ex-smoker. "I have much more energy, I got back into gardening this summer and I can walk.

"I never thought giving up smoking would make me feel so well and so fit. People tell me I'm looking much better and my skin has improved. I haven't put on weight this time, because even though the taste of food has improved, I am taking exercise, which I think is keeping the weight down. I feel very well and am very happy that I stopped smoking."

## TIPS FOR QUITTING

### **Prepare to Quit Smoking**

Write down your reasons for quitting and keep the list to hand.

### **Make a Date to Quit**

Most people who successfully quit smoking do so by stopping altogether rather than by gradually cutting down. Pick your day to stop smoking and stick to it.

### **Quit with a Friend**

For support and motivation, encourage a friend or family member to quit with you.

### **Think Positive**

You may find you experience withdrawal symptoms once you stop smoking. These are in fact, the positive signs that your body is recovering from the effects of tobacco. Cough, irritability and sleep disturbances are some common symptoms. Don't worry, they're all perfectly normal and they will disappear within a week or two.

### **Learn to Deal with Cravings**

Cravings can occur frequently during the first few days after stopping. A craving increases in intensity over a period of 3-5 minutes and then begins to subside.

So when the craving starts, apply the 4D's:

**Delay** at least 3 minutes the urge will pass.

**Drink** a glass of water or fruit juice.

**Distract** yourself – move away from the situation.

**Deep** breaths. Breathe slowly and deeply.

### **Change Your Routine**

Smoking is often linked to certain times and situations, such as the first smoke in the morning, drinking tea, coffee or alcohol. Avoid those situations by doing something different at these times. It helps to break the link between the association and smoking.

# CARDIAC REHABILITATION

**Cardiac Rehabilitation, provided in many hospitals, improves quality of life for heart patients and reduces the need for readmission. Heart patients who benefit from cardiac rehabilitation include those who've had a heart attack, angina, angioplasty or a surgical bypass.**

"A rehabilitation unit typically offers an Exercise & Education programme to help people make some lifestyle changes and so manage their heart disease in the best possible way and reduce the risk of further events", says Irene Byrne, a trained co-ordinator of Cardiac Rehabilitation at the Mater Hospital, Dublin.

Cardiac rehabilitation aims to offer support to patients pre- and post-surgery in hospital and a follow-up programme after discharge.

"The advice and support is very practical. For example, it is about not lifting anything heavy for some weeks because the breast bone has not healed. There are so many positive things to look at: getting more active, improving posture, taking adequate rest and handling pain. It is important to comply properly with medication and to take tablets as advised.

"As well as talking, we need to listen. We need to understand people's personal circumstances, their knowledge of nutrition, the support they have at home, distance from services and so on, which will impact on their recovery."

The Mater Hospital runs an occasional day lecture series for heart patients and families on healthy eating, exercise and leisure, understanding medication, and coping with stress, with time given for people to ask questions on areas of concern. Their ongoing Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme, typical of other rehabilitation programmes in the country, is available

to patients about ten weeks after surgery and lasts 8 - 10 weeks, two hours a day, 3 days a week. Each visit includes exercise and once a week a session with a member of the multi-disciplinary team, such as a dietician or psychologist.

Monitored exercise within the Programme takes place in a fully fitted gym. Exercise for heart patients helps reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels, helps strengthen heart muscle and reduces stress levels. Each patient is offered a tailored programme depending on age, building up slowly, with the ultimate aim of walking for 40 minutes five times a week. "We prescribe exercise, using the acronym FITT which stands for Frequency - how often? Intensity - how hard? Timing - how long? and what Type", says Irene. "We get the most questions about intensity, because people are worried about overdoing it. The heart is a muscle which needs to be worked. We teach people an easy self-monitoring technique so that they can know how much would be too much.

"The education programme discusses all the risk factors for heart disease in great detail. Our nutritionist uses the Food Pyramid to explain healthy eating. Lots of our patients have never heard of it, and using it as a guide can put them very quickly on the right road. These sessions have only eight patients per professional, so there is a great opportunity for information exchange, and people learn a lot. What we are really trying to sell is health belief, giving people the confidence that they can make the changes to get well.

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## A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

Gloria Carty who lives in Wexford had a heart double by-pass in January this year and says while the operation gave her a whole new lease of life, the cardiac rehabilitation in Wexford General Hospital which followed was nearly as good in further improving her life quality.

Aged 49, married with a teenage son, she began to feel unwell about four years ago. "I suffered from angina, had very high blood pressure and suffered from shortness of breath. My quality of life was greatly reduced.

An angiogram three years ago identified blockages in blood vessels, which her doctors tried to manage with medication. An operation, probably a by-pass, remained a worrying option down the road, but Gloria finally had to face the fact that she was not going to get better without it.



"Heart surgery is not only difficult for the patient, it is harrowing for the family. I sat my son down and tried to talk to him about what was ahead.

My parents were very worried, my father wrote a letter to me about what I meant to them, which was heartbreaking to receive but very touching as well.

"Going home was very frightening. I had been very protected in hospital, and it was difficult for people to find the right balance between taking care of me and not smothering me. I wanted to do things, but got tired so easily, even talking to someone tired me. It took a good three months before I began to feel anyway normal.

"Cardiac rehabilitation is the most fantastic thing that has ever been invented! It gave me a new lease of life. Before I was very insecure because I was not sure what I could or could not do. I would go for a walk, and then think I had better not go any further because I might not be able to get back. I would stand at the bottom of the stairs wondering could I climb it

in one go, or would I get a pain.

"Over 7 weeks, two sessions for two hours each week, rehabilitation opened everything up and gave me great confidence. The exercise equipment was excellent - the step up machine, the exercise bike, the walking machine. It helped me become more fit, while the nurse explained how to monitor ourselves so that we knew ourselves how much we could do. The approach not only gives you a lot of knowledge and information, it shows you how to apply it. These days I am much more relaxed and feel good about myself. The next hurdle is to tackle the weight problem, I have an appointment with the rehab dietician and am very hopeful."

## TAKING WOMEN PATIENTS SERIOUSLY

Last March when Catherine Dempsey, aged 46 with 3 children aged 10 - 19 years from Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, got a pain in her chest and down her right arm, she instinctively worried that it was a heart problem, then dismissed the idea. "I thought I was being paranoid, I had been having pains in my right arm on and off for about a year, usually when I was a bit stressed and I was concerned because my father had heart disease. Catherine went to the doctor in March and was put on a heart monitor for 24 hours, and on her return visit was given the all clear regarding her heart. "At first I was very relieved and wanted to believe that they were right.

Six weeks later and several more G.P. visits, she was no better and eventually went herself to Wexford General Hospital. They did some tests which diagnosed angina, and told me that my father's history was relevant, as was the pain in my right arm. I learnt I had had a slight heart attack that morning and I wasn't surprised because the pain was worse than it had ever been."

Catherine was stabilised in Wexford Hospital then underwent a medical procedure in Dublin - angioplasty and a stent insertion to keep the artery clear. She was in hospital for 10 days in total and then returned home with instructions to take things easy. "I found I was exhausted, I suppose it was because the body had been through such trauma." In mid-July she joined the 7 week outpatient cardiac rehabilitation programme based at Wexford Hospital, and can't praise it enough.

"We met twice a week for exercise and a seminar on different topics. Both were excellent and I have learnt a lot. For example, as a result of one lecture 'Know Your Tablets', I was able to identify the side-effects I was experiencing through my medication and had it changed. We have learnt a lot about risk factors - family history, diet, lifestyle and how much each contributes. I don't smoke, but if I did, I would

have been very influenced by our doctor who told us that of all the risk factors, stopping smoking was the most effective way of lowering your risk. He told us 'if you stopped smoking the day you went to hospital after a heart attack, it reduced the risk of another heart attack by 50 - 70%.' That really struck me, and I would like other people to know it.' We have also learnt about stress management, relaxation, diet and how to read food labels when shopping."



Now, some months down the road after her own scare, Catherine has taken up the reins of life again, is back at work, and beginning to recover former energy levels through walking and working out in a gym. The event, however, has left its mark, and the stress management techniques she has learnt have been important. "Because I can become stressed, I am learning to manage that.

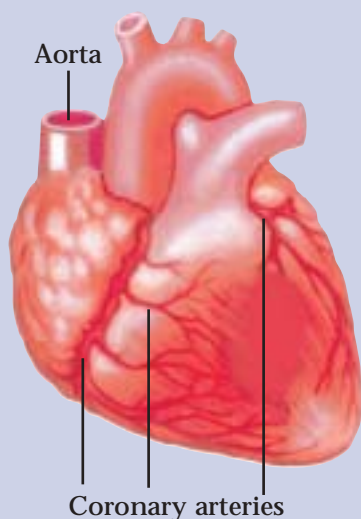
"I would say to women, listen to yourself. If you feel you have a problem with your heart, go to the doctor, be assertive about it, and don't worry about feeling paranoid. I accept that it may be more difficult to diagnose symptoms in women, but I think for that very reason, GP's should listen to women themselves, and be open to the possibility that symptoms they are describing can be related to heart problems, particularly when there is a family history."



# YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

## What is Heart Attack?

The heart is a muscular bag which squeezes to pump blood round our bodies. It has its own blood supply from the coronary arteries. A heart attack occurs when the heart muscle is damaged due to the blood supply being blocked off. This is caused by a build-up of plaque on the inner surface of the artery. If the plaque breaks, a clot forms in the artery, which blocks the blood supply to the heart muscle.



## Symptoms

Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing or pain in the centre of the chest that lasts **more than** a few minutes.

Pain may spread to the shoulders, neck or arms.

There may also be lightheadedness, fainting, sweating, nausea or shortness of breath.

## What should I do?

Not all the above symptoms are always present. If only some are present, don't wait.

**Get help fast by dialling 999 and calling your G.P.**

Meanwhile sit or lie down.

## What is Angina?

Angina occurs when the heart muscle does not get enough blood. This happens, if the coronary arteries become so narrowed by

plaque that not enough blood flows to the heart during exercise. Angina may be felt as pain, discomfort, pressure, heaviness or tightness in the chest, neck or arms. It may be triggered by inappropriate exercise or stress and go away with rest or relaxation.

It may last for 60 seconds or longer. (Short jabbing pains lasting a few seconds are not likely to be angina). Prolonged angina symptoms (30 minutes or more), may mean a heart attack.

## Treatment

Angina can be treated by medication and it helps to wait two hours after meals before taking exercise. Risk of angina is also reduced by bringing your weight down to a healthy level, stopping smoking and covering your face with a scarf in cold weather.

## What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure occurs when the heart can't pump enough blood through the body to meet its needs.

## Causes include

- ♥ Narrowed arteries due to coronary heart disease
- ♥ Past heart attack resulting in scar tissue which affects the work of the heart
- ♥ High blood pressure
- ♥ Heart valve disease due to past rheumatic fever or other causes
- ♥ Infection of the heart muscle - called myocarditis
- ♥ Defects in the heart at birth called congenital heart disease
- ♥ Infection of the heart valves called endocarditis

## Symptoms

People with heart failure can't exert themselves as they become short of breath and tire very easily. Also, as blood-flow from the heart is slow, blood returning to the heart backs up, causing congestion

## What is heart disease?

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) is a broad term used to describe the many diseases that can affect the cardiovascular system including diseases of the valves of the heart, diseases of the heart muscle and diseases of the arteries and of the veins. By far the most common type of disease in the system occurs as a result of hardening of the arteries, 'atherosclerosis', which most often leads to a heart attack- Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) - and can also lead to stroke.

As women get older, their risk of heart disease increases. For many women this increased risk coincides with menopause.

in the tissues, rather like a traffic jam. This, in turn, can cause swelling in the legs, ankles and sometimes other areas. Fluid may collect in the lungs and interfere with breathing, which can cause shortness of breath, especially when lying down. Weight gain is another problem. Heart failure affects the ability of the kidneys to dispose of salt and water, which in turn can increase the limb swelling.

## Treatment includes:

- ♥ Rest
- ♥ Healthy eating
- ♥ Specialised drugs as prescribed by your doctor and diuretics which help the body get rid of excess salt and water

## Can heart failure be corrected?

Yes, mild and moderate heart failure are treatable, and with proper medical care people don't have to become invalids. For example, some cases can be improved by treating high blood pressure, or with surgery to replace abnormal heart valves.

# YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

## What is a Stroke?

Stroke is a disease affecting the arteries supplying blood, oxygen and nutrients to the brain.

A stroke happens when a blood vessel bursts or artery is clogged by a blood clot or other matter. This rupture or blockage deprives the brain of blood, which causes the nerve cells in the affected area to die within minutes.

### Effects of a stroke.

When nerve cells can't function, the part of the body controlled by those cells also shuts down. The effects of a stroke are often permanent because dead brain cells cannot be replaced.

### Different types of strokes.

There are different types of strokes - those caused by blood clots or other particles (cerebral thrombosis and cerebral embolism), and those caused by haemorrhage.

### Cerebral Thrombosis

This is the most common type of stroke. Thrombosis is another name for blood clot. Strokes often happen at night or early mornhig when blood pressure is low.

### Cerebral Embolism

This accounts for about 1 in 10 of all strokes. It occurs when a wandering clot (or embolus) or other particle forms in a blood vessel, usually in the heart. The clot lodges in an artery leading to or in the brain blocking the flow of blood. This stroke is often preceded by a mini stroke also called a T.I.A. (Transient Ischaemic Attack)

### Cerebral Haemorrhage

This accounts for about 7 in every 100 strokes. It occurs when a blood vessel on the surface of the brain ruptures and bleeds into the space between the brain and the skull.

### Can strokes be treated or prevented?

Lifestyle factors, especially smoking and high blood pressure contribute to the risk of stroke.

Lowering cholesterol also reduces the risk of stroke. Your doctor may prescribe lifestyle changes as well as medication to reduce blood pressure or to reduce clotting such as aspirin and warfarin.

However, warfarin has side effects especially in older patients who should be monitored carefully.

**"Too many people only care about their heart after a heart attack, they are the lucky ones - they get a second chance"**

**Dr. Vincent Maher,  
Consultant Cardiologist and  
Medical Director,  
Irish Heart Foundation,  
who answers some  
common questions in  
relation to heart disease.**

## What is Atrial Fibrillation?

The atrium is an upper heart chamber, and fibrillate means to quiver. As a result the two small upper chambers quiver instead of beating effectively. This affects their pumping ability, and blood can pool and clot. If a piece of blood clot from the atria becomes lodged in the brain, a stroke results. Atrial fibrillation is a disorder that increases with age.

## What is a Bypass?

In this operation blood vessels outside the heart are used to carry blood to areas of heart muscle with a low blood supply due to narrowing of the coronary arteries. The bypass involves using a vein from the leg, attaching one end to the aorta, (the main blood vessel leaving the heart), and the other to a healthy part of the artery beyond the blockage. Sometimes arteries inside the chest wall are used to do the bypass.

### Is bypass successful?

Generally yes. Afterwards many patients enroll in a cardiac rehabil

itation programme and go on to enjoy a good quality of life.

## What is Angioplasty

Angioplasty is a specialised treatment for narrowed or blocked coronary arteries. It involves placing a balloon into the narrowed blood vessel, then blowing up the balloon and so pushing out the narrowed segment.

### Is angioplasty successful?

Angioplasty usually gives good relief from immediate pain and discomfort. Long-term about 1 in 3 patients redevelop their original symptoms and need another angioplasty.

## What is a stent?

A stent is a metal mesh that surrounds an angioplasty balloon and when the balloon is inflated, the stent is expanded. The expanded stent stays in the artery after the balloon is withdrawn and pushes the plaques outward, clearing the blockage in the artery.

## What is a Pacemaker?

A pacemaker helps to make your heart beat faster when it needs to, and so reduce the risk of dizziness or blackout

### How does a pacemaker work?

A pacemaker consists of a battery and long wire. The wire is fed into your heart and the battery fitted under the skin in a simple, safe operation. When in place, the pacemaker can tell if your heart is slowing down, and so kicks into action to trigger a faster heart beat. Pacemakers can be temporary or permanent.



## LOCAL HEALTH BOARD HEALTH PROMOTION OFFICES

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