



## Love is in the air and never a better time to look after your heart.

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## National Heart Month 2021

Each year, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) declares February as National Heart Month in the UK. During this time, awareness of a variety of heart conditions are brought to the fore with National Heart Month.

Many of us have heard of diseases relating to the heart and circulation and refer to these as cardiovascular diseases (CVD) or heart disease. However, there are many different types of heart conditions and problems.

#### Some examples of CVD and heart disease include:

- Angina
- Heart attack
- Heart failure
- Abnormal heart rhythms (Arrhythmia)
- Coronary heart disease
- Atrial fibrillation
- Congenital heart disease

CVD is both the UK's and the world's number one killer, according to the World Health Organization. An estimated 17.9 million people died from CVDs in 2016, representing 31% of all global deaths. Whilst the most recent figures from the BHF show that every day, 460 people in the UK die from CVD. The BHF also reports that there are 7.4 million people in the UK living with CVD, someone you know – or maybe even yourself – has been touched by CVD.

Understanding heart conditions is an incredibly difficult task – there are lots of different types and understanding how the heart works is more helpful when trying to learn about these conditions. But looking at the facts will benefit yourself, your employees and the people you love in the long run.

## What are the risk factors?

There are several aspects that may increase your risk of developing CVD, but the good news is that many heart and circulatory diseases are caused by risk factors that we can control, treat, and modify.

#### The three easiest areas for you to make a change are:

- Smoking: Smokers are almost twice as likely to have a heart attack compared to people who have never smoked.
- Obesity: Being overweight can have a big impact on your health, especially if you carry weight around your middle.
- Physical inactivity: The heart is a muscle, and like any other muscle it needs physical activity to help it work properly.

#### Other areas, that may take a little more time to understand include:

- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Ethnicity
- Family history
- Air pollution
- Stress
- Mental health

To gain a better understanding of some of these risk factors, please visit our [Take5 resource page](#) for free, downloadable information.



Each February, we actively promote National Heart Month at Healthy Performance by encouraging employers to raise awareness of the dangers of heart disease to their employees. 2021 is no different. In fact, while we are still amid the pandemic, ensuring that you are looking after yourself is essential.

On a wider scale, we assess the heart all year-round as part of our employee health checks. When the world returns to normal, during our health assessments we offer onsite checks which cover blood pressure and total cholesterol checks.

### Why do these tests matter?

Firstly, blood pressure is the force that your blood pushes on the walls of the arteries. If you have high blood pressure then essentially there is a strain on the arteries and the heart. This can increase the risk of heart disease but also, strokes and kidney disease.

Around 30% of adults in England have high blood pressure but most don't know they have the condition. It often presents no symptoms, but it's important because it raises the risk of serious health problems such as heart disease and stroke. A blood pressure test is quick and painless and provides people with an instant result.

Secondly, it is essential that a person has enough cholesterol in their bodies in order to work effectively. However, too much cholesterol can cause our arteries to become blocked, which increases our risk of heart disease and stroke.

The risk of coronary heart disease (when the heart's blood supply is blocked or disrupted) rises as your blood's cholesterol level increases and this can cause angina during physical activity.

Similarly to blood pressure, having a high cholesterol level itself doesn't cause any symptoms which means that a person could have high cholesterol and not know about it. The only way to know your cholesterol level is to have it tested.

To find out more about the heart tests that we offer as part of our employee health checks, please contact our friendly team and we will be happy to provide you with further information.

## Take the Test: How healthy is your 'ticker'?

- Get a watch with a second hand.
- Place your index and middle finger of your hand on the inner wrist of the other arm, just below the base of the thumb. You should feel a tapping or pulsing against your fingers.
- Count the number of taps you feel in **10 seconds**.
- **Multiply that number by 6** to find out your heart rate for 1 minute.

A normal resting heart rate range is between **60-80 beats per minute**.

A resting heart rate outside of the normal resting heart rate range combined with symptoms like shortness of breath, dizziness and fatigue may indicate a heart problem. Checking your pulse can also tell you if your heartbeat is regular or irregular. You should make an appointment with your GP if you're concerned about your resting heart rate.



### Fact of the month

The effect of being in a loving relationship can lower your blood pressure and normalise your readings.



### Tip of the month

Try hugging someone, or a pet that you love (within your household, of course) to trigger the release of oxytocin, a hormone that in some research has shown to lower stress and anxiety.



## Pancake day recipes

With pancake day 2021 just around the corner (Tuesday 16th February) and lockdown 3.0 still currently in place, why not give flipping some pancakes a go? After all, what else is there to do on a Tuesday evening?

At Healthy Performance, we like to encourage balance. Nutrition is not about living off lettuce leaves for the rest of your life, but about enjoying treats in moderation while eating well much of the time.

Therefore, we are not going to throw a bunch of healthy pancake recipes your way when most of us love to load teaspoons of sugar and chocolate spread on our pancakes.

However, this collection of sweet and savoury recipes below does include a mixture of healthy(ish) and absolutely not healthy recipes for you to choose from.

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### Savoury Pancake Recipes

For those of you who love to have pancakes for dinner AND dessert, these savoury recipes are perfect for you!

#### Spinach and Tuna Pancakes

These wholesome spinach and tuna pancakes are both delicious and nutritious, delivering 3 of your 5-a-day in each portion!

The high protein count will help you to stay fuller for longer with the tuna containing all the essential amino acids that are required by the body for growth and maintenance of lean muscle tissue. Canned tuna can also be a good source of heart-healthy omega 3 fatty acids.

Spinach is an excellent source of many vitamins and minerals including vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C and iron.

*Servings: 2*  
*Calories per serving: 539*  
*Carbs: 48g*  
*Protein: 38g*  
*Fat: 19g*

View the full recipe on [BBC Good Food](#).

#### Smoked Ham and Cheese Pancakes

Is there any better comfort combination than ham and cheese? We think not!

This recipe has a lower protein content than our last savoury suggestion, so for a higher protein dinner why not try subbing out the ham for some chicken? Or to reduce the fat content, you could swap the gruyere for a lower-fat alternative.

*Servings: 4*  
*Calories per serving: 327*  
*Carbs: 23g*  
*Protein: 15g*  
*Fat: 19g*

View the full recipe on [BBC Good Food](#).

### Sweet Pancake Recipes

Got a sweet tooth? We've got you covered!

#### Lemon Drizzle Pancakes

Based on a classic bake, these ultra-indulgent pancakes are sure to satisfy any sweet tooth.

*Servings: 4*  
*Calories per serving: 560*  
*Carbs: 67g*  
*Protein: 12g*  
*Fat: 26g*

View the full recipe on [BBC Good Food](#).

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### Vegan Pancakes

Decided to extend Veganuary into February? Even if you don't choose to stick to the vegan diet full time, these vegan pancakes are delicious and are made using your favourite plant-based milk. Suggested toppings include vegan chocolate chips, berries, or whatever else you're craving.

#### Easy vegan pancakes

Make this great base for vegan pancakes: use your favourite plant-based milk, and add vegan choc chips, blueberries, or anything else you fancy.

*Servings: 16 pancakes*  
*Calories per pancake: 90*  
*Carbs: 16g*  
*Protein: 3g*  
*Fat: 1g*

View the full recipe on [BBC Good Food](#).

Visit [www.healthyperformance.co.uk](http://www.healthyperformance.co.uk) for more recipes

Let us know if you try any of these recipes – happy flipping!