

"Just because no one else can heal or do your inner work for you doesn't mean you can, should, or need to do it alone."

- Lisa Olivera

In this month's newsletter:

National Heart Month

Time to Talk Day 2022

Fact & Tip of the month



National Heart Month

Each year, the British Heart Foundation declares February as National Heart Month. The aim is to increase awareness of cardiovascular diseases and encourage people to have their heart health checked.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the UK and therefore it couldn't be more important to get your heart checked. There are two easy measures you can get to check your basic heart health, and these are your blood pressure and cholesterol readings.

Blood Pressure

Ideal: 90/60mmHg and 120/80mmHg

High: 140/90mmHg or higher

Low: 90/60mmHg or lower

Cholesterol

Healthy level

Total Cholesterol: 5 or below

HDL (good cholesterol): 1 or above

LDL (bad cholesterol): 3 or below

As we all know, the heart plays a vital role in keeping us alive by pumping blood around the body. There are a variety of factors that can negatively impact the function of the heart and increase your chance of developing cardiovascular disease.

Your cardiovascular risk (Q-risk) is the percentage chance of a cardiovascular event within the next 10 years. There are several factors that can affect your risk score including:

- Family history
- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Age
- Poor cholesterol
- Diabetes

Symptoms of Cardiovascular Disease

If you ever experience the following symptoms, call 999 immediately:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck or back
- Pain or discomfort in both arms or shoulders
- Feeling weak, lightheaded or nauseous
- Symptoms of stroke: Act **FAST**
 - o **FACE** (is the face dropped on one side)
 - o **ARMS** (can you raise both arms above your head and keep them there)
 - o **SPEECH** (is your speech slurred or garbled)
 - o **TIME** (it's time to dial 999)

However, it's not all doom and gloom as there are also many ways that you can improve your heart health and decrease the risk of developing heart disease which are outlined on the next page.

Daily exercise



22.9%
of adults are
classed as
physically
inactive

One of the best things you can do for your heart health is to exercise regularly. Exercise helps to lower blood pressure, maintain a healthy weight, improve cholesterol values, and reduce inflammation across the body. It is recommended that you complete 150+ minutes of moderate intensity exercise each week – **just over 20 minutes a day.**

Catch more zzz's

Insufficient sleep is linked with increased blood pressure and an increased chance of cardiovascular events. This is because your sympathetic nervous system, which controls your stress response, slows down leading to decreased heart rate and blood pressure. So, by snoozing for the recommended 7-9 hours per night, you are decreasing your cardiovascular risk.

Eat your five a day

Only **31%** of adults
meet the recommended
5-a-day for their fruit and
veg consumption



Aiming for 5+ fruit and vegetables each day improves your blood pressure, cholesterol, and vascular function. Fruit and vegetables contain many beneficial nutrients such as fibre to help control cholesterol and antioxidants to help slow down or prevent atherosclerosis, which is the hardening and thickening of the arteries.

Reduce your intake of saturated fats

Saturated fats increase your LDL (bad) cholesterol levels and cause a build up of fatty deposits within the arteries. By sticking to a mostly healthy diet of fresh, whole foods as opposed to processed foods, your intake of saturated fats should stay within a healthy level.

Stop smoking

The chemicals in cigarettes make your arteries sticky and therefore makes it easier for atherosclerosis to occur. This could lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Time to Talk Day 2022

Time to Talk day was created by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness, two of the country's biggest mental health organisations. The event was created to encourage people to start talking only about their mental health as **having conversations about our mental health can help both ourselves and others.**



Why is talking so important?

- One in four of us will experience a mental health problem in any given year
- One in six people report experiencing a common mental health problem (such as depression and anxiety) each week
- One in five people have suicidal thoughts
- Men are three times more likely to take their own life than women

GoodShape's UK PLC 2021 Workforce Health Report reveals that in 2021, poor mental health accounted for 19% of all lost working time across the country with an average length of 18.8 days of mental health related absence. This highlights that mental illness is not just a 'personal problem' but also affects the workplace.

A 2017 poll found that only 13% of employees are comfortable talking about mental illness at work and alarmingly, 54% of workers who take two or more mental health related absences will go on to leave their jobs.



How can you encourage your team to talk?

This doesn't have to be in the workplace if your employees aren't comfortable in doing so, but by providing them with the right tools and positive reinforcement, conversations could start happening with friends and family or even co-workers.

Mental health can be tricky to talk about sometimes, so Mind and Rethink have put together some of their useful tips for talking and listening about mental health.

- **Ask questions and listen.** Asking open questions allows the other person to talk about how they are feeling and what they are going through. By asking questions, this shows the other person that you genuinely care and will help them to open up.
- **Time and place.** Some people may find it easier to talk side by side rather than face to face. This can help to take some pressure off the person who is discussing their mental health, so try going for a walk or doing an activity whilst you have a conversation.
- **Don't try and fix it.** Unless the person has directly asked for some advice, it is often best to just listen. The other person has most likely already tried many solutions so you don't want to accidentally make them feel inadequate or that these solutions should have worked. Learning to manage or recover from mental health problems is a long journey.
- **Treat them the same.** They are still the same person! So please treat them as you always would and do the things you would normally do.
- **Be patient.** Some people may not be ready to open up about what they are going through. In asking how they are doing you have made it easier for them to open up to you in the future if they wish.

Additionally...

... in the workplace you may find that holding regular 1:1's with your team makes it easier for them to speak with you about any difficulties that they may have. A 1:1 provides a safe and confidential space to talk without the individual having to 'find the right time' to approach you for a conversation.

At Healthy Performance, our department heads carry out 1:1's with their teams on a weekly basis and use this time to build solid working relationships and discuss the plan for the week ahead, as well as ensuring that everyone is doing okay and offering support where required.

So, what steps will you take to ensure that your employees are comfortable talking about mental health in the workplace?

For some inspiration, visit the Time to Talk 'how to take part' page [HERE](#).



Tip of the month

Talking about your feelings isn't a sign of weakness. It's part of taking charge of your wellbeing and doing what you can to stay healthy.

Fact of the month

Laughing is good for your heart. It reduces stress and gives a boost to your immune system.