



Heart Health

Time Taken:
20 Minutes



Objectives

This section will introduce participants to the topic of Heart Health.

How to Keep a Healthy Heart



Step 1

Introduction

- ♥ Tell participants that today's topic is heart health.
- ♥ The heart plays a very important role pumping blood around our body, so we must keep it healthy.
- ♥ The blood carries food and oxygen to all of our muscles.

Step 2

Risk Factors

Some lifestyle factors increase our risk of heart disease. The good news is that we can change these lifestyle factors and so reduce our risk of heart disease.

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| ♥ Unhealthy Diet. | ♥ Overweight/Obesity. |
| ♥ High Blood Pressure/
Cholesterol. | ♥ Physical Inactivity. |
| ♥ Smoking. | ♥ Alcohol. |



Unhealthy Diet

- ♥ A diet which is high in fat and salt is bad for our heart. The best way to have a heart healthy diet is to stick to the food pyramid/Eatwell Guide.



Physical Inactivity

- ♥ Regular physical activity helps you keep your heart healthy and has many other health benefits, including reducing stress levels.
- ♥ Physical activity makes your heart stronger and helps to keep you at a healthy weight.
- ♥ Aim to do 30 minutes moderate physical activity at least 5 days per week.



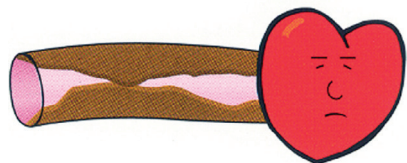
Overweight/Obesity

- ♥ When we are overweight our heart has to work harder to pump blood around the body.
- ♥ A healthcare professional will tell you if you need to lose weight.
- ♥ *If athletes are comfortable you can use the BMI chart in this toolkit to find out their BMI.*



Blood Pressure

- ♥ Blood pressure is the pressure against the walls of the vessels that carry blood around the body.
- ♥ If blood pressure is too high it can cause damage to blood vessels.
- ♥ Small lifestyle changes such as changing diet and increasing physical activity can have an effect on your blood pressure.



Cholesterol

- ♥ Cholesterol is a type of fat in your blood.
- ♥ It is made by the liver.
- ♥ If you have too much cholesterol in your blood it can cause heart disease.
- ♥ Too much bad fat (also called saturated fat) from food increases our cholesterol levels.
- ♥ Foods high in saturated fat include: butter, hard margarine, lard, cream cheese, fatty meat, cakes, biscuits and chocolates.



Here are some tips on lowering your cholesterol:

- ♥ If overweight, get down to a healthy weight.
- ♥ Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- ♥ Eat more wholegrain breads, pastas and cereals.
- ♥ Choose lean meats, and cut off visible fat on cuts of meat.
- ♥ Choose low fat dairy and butter options.
- ♥ Choose low fat methods of cooking such as grilling, baking instead of frying.
- ♥ Your doctor may advise you to take medication to help lower your cholesterol.



Smoking

A person that smokes has a higher risk of having a heart problem. Nicotine (drug that is in cigarettes) causes the blood vessels to narrow making it harder for your heart to pump blood around your body. This in turn increases your blood pressure which is damaging to your health.

Step 3

How to Keep your Heart Healthy

- ♥ Be more physically active.
- ♥ If you smoke, try to stop.
- ♥ Eat a balanced diet.
- ♥ Drink less alcohol.
- ♥ Be a healthy weight.
- ♥ Learn to relax – take time out for yourself.
- ♥ Have a regular blood pressure and cholesterol check with your doctor.



Physical Activity

Participating in physical activity is good for our heart. It is recommended to be active for at least 30 minutes five days a week at moderate intensity. Moderate intensity causes an increase in heart rate and breathing similar to a brisk walk. (For more information see Physical Activity Workshop).

You can build up 30 minutes of activity in 2 or 3 shorter sessions for example 2 x 15 minute or 3 x 10 minute sessions. Explain to participants that muscles become stronger when used, and that it is important to do physical activity each day. This makes your heart work to keep it strong and healthy.



Healthy Eating

Invite participants to suggest some heart healthy foods

- ♥ Fruits and vegetables.
- ♥ Lean meat.
- ♥ Wholegrain bread pasta and cereals.
- ♥ Low fat products instead of full fat.
- ♥ Oily fish such as salmon or mackerel.

Explain to participants that it is important to keep a healthy weight. If you are overweight, you are more likely to have high blood pressure. By having a healthy diet and doing regular physical activity you are less likely to be overweight.



Stop Smoking

Smoking causes our arteries (the tubes that carry blood around our body) to narrow. This makes it more difficult for the blood to move around your body. If you are a smoker you should see your doctor or pharmacist about quitting.



Drinking Alcohol in Moderation

- ♥ Drinking large amounts of alcohol can increase blood pressure and damage the liver and heart.
- ♥ If you drink alcohol, spread your drinking over the week, keep some days alcohol-free and do not drink more than the recommended upper weekly limits.
- ♥ In the Republic of Ireland guidelines for upper limits allow 11 drinks for females and 17 for males.
- ♥ In Northern Ireland guidelines allow 14 units per week for both females and males.

1.5 unit of alcohol



1 pub
measure
spirit
(35ml).



½ pint or
glass of
beer.



1 small
glass
wine.

Step 4



Salt and Your Heart

- ♥ Too much salt in your diet can cause high blood pressure which results in an unhealthy heart.
- ♥ The body needs about 4 grams of salt a day which is about a teaspoon of salt.
- ♥ *Bring in a food label and show participants that there is already salt in many foods we eat.*

	Per Serving (100g)	Per Serving (25g)
Energy	251kj 539kj	516kcal 129kcal
Protein	7.9g	2.0g
Carbohydrate of which sugars	53.6g 4.1g	13.4g 1.0g
Fat of which saturates	30.0g 2.9g	7.5g 0.7g
Dietary Fibre	4.5g	1.1g
Sodium	0.8g	0.2g
Equivalent as Salt	2.0g	0.5g

- **Please note:** salt is often shown as sodium on food labels.
- It is important to remember that sodium is only a part of salt and to get a true salt content we must multiply the sodium content by 2.5.
- For example a packet of crisps contains 1g of sodium but 2.5g of salt.

Step 5

Screening

The doctor will check your cholesterol and blood pressure when you go for a check up. If they are high he/she will tell you if you need to change your diet or take more exercise or take some medication.

It is important to get a regular check up to make sure your heart is healthy.

Step 6

Task Time

This week's task is to make one heart health change e.g. take 30 minutes physical activity five days per week or to stop adding salt to your food at the table. Make sure everyone takes note in their task diary.



Special Olympics Ireland - Health Programme

Task Diary

Complete? ☒ ☐

This diary is to help you keep track of your health tasks each week. Every time you get a new health task take note of it in your diary.

Personal Hygiene	Keep track of your daily hygiene routine using your door hanger.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smoking	If you are a smoker, decide on a date to give up. Make contact with any support you may need, for example your GP.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alcohol	If you drink alcoholic drinks try swapping them for alcohol free versions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strong Minds	Take some time this week to practice strong breathing to help you feel relaxed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>