

# CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE IS THE WORLD'S BIGGEST KILLER

It has many causes: from smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, to air pollution, and less common conditions such as Chagas disease and cardiac amyloidosis.

For the 520 million people living with CVD, COVID-19 has been heartbreaking. They have been more at risk of developing severe forms of the virus. And many have been afraid to attend routine and emergency appointments, and have become isolated from friends and family.

THIS YEAR ON WORLD HEART DAY:

## USE ♥ FOR HUMANITY

Access to treatment and support for CVD varies widely across the world. Over 75% of CVD deaths occur in low-to middle-income countries, but access can be an issue anywhere. By getting involved with global events such as World Heart Day as well as local activities, we are empowered to spread awareness and help make a difference in the lives of all humankind.

## USE ♥ FOR NATURE

Air pollution is responsible for 25% of all CVD deaths, taking the lives of 7 million people every year. Whether they are more immediate actions like walking or cycling instead of travelling by car, or longer-term efforts such as supporting clean air legislation, each of us can contribute to a healthier planet in our own way.

## USE ♥ FOR YOU

Psychological stress can double the risk of having a heart attack. Exercise, meditation, and getting enough quality sleep help to lower stress levels. By resisting the harmful coping mechanisms and bad habits induced by stress, we can maximise our individual heart health.

**The World Heart Federation (WHF)** is an umbrella organisation representing the global cardiovascular community, uniting patient, medical, and scientific groups. WHF influences policies and shares knowledge to promote cardiovascular health for everyone. WHF connects the cardiovascular community, translates science into policy and promotes the exchange of information and knowledge to achieve heart health for everyone. Our advocacy and convening roles help us empower our members to prevent and control cardiovascular disease.

**World Heart Day on 29 September** is an opportunity for everyone to stop and consider how best to use heart for humanity, for nature, and for you. Beating CVD is something that matters to every beating heart.

Visit [worldheartday.org](http://worldheartday.org) and follow us on social media to find out how you can get involved – we'll be adding lots of resources, tips and info in the run up to 29 September.



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# USE ♥ FOR EVERY ♥





## USE TO EAT WELL







-  Cut down on sugary beverages and fruit juices – choose water or unsweetened juices instead.
-  Swap sweet, sugary treats for fresh fruit as a healthy alternative.
-  Try to eat 5 portions (about a handful each) of fruit and veg a day – they can be fresh, frozen, tinned or dried.
-  Keep the amount of alcohol you drink within recommended guidelines.
-  Limit processed foods that are often high in salt, sugar and fat - unpack and unwrap less, peel and cook more!
-  Search online or download an app and get lots of heart-healthy recipe tips.

### DID YOU KNOW?

High blood glucose (blood sugar) can be indicative of diabetes. CVD accounts for the majority of deaths in people with diabetes so if it's left undiagnosed and untreated it can put you at increased risk of heart disease and stroke.



## USE TO GET MORE ACTIVE







-  Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity 5 times a week.
-  Or at least 75 minutes spread throughout the week of vigorous-intensity activity.
-  Playing, walking, housework, dancing – they all count!
-  Be more active every day – take the stairs, walk or cycle instead of driving.
-  Stay fit at home – even if you're on lockdown you can join virtual exercise classes and workouts for the whole family.
-  Download an app or use a wearable device to keep track of your steps and progress.

### DID YOU KNOW?

High blood pressure is one of the main risk factors for CVD. It's called the 'silent killer' because it usually has no warning signs or symptoms, and many people don't realise they have it.



## USE TO SAY NO TO TOBACCO

-  It's the single best thing you can do to improve your heart health.
-  Within 2 years of quitting, the risk of coronary heart disease is substantially reduced.
-  Within 15 years the risk of CVD returns to that of a non-smoker.
-  Exposure to secondhand smoke is also a cause of heart disease in non-smokers.
-  By quitting/not smoking you'll improve both your health and the health of those around you.
-  If you're having trouble stopping, seek professional advice and ask your employer if they provide smoking-cessation services.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Cholesterol is associated with around 4 million deaths per year, so visit your healthcare professional and ask them to measure your levels, as well as your weight and body mass index (BMI). They'll then be able to advise on your CVD risk so you can take action to improve your heart health.