

## Cardiovascular Risk Score (QRISK2)

### Why have I received this leaflet?

You have recently had a blood test to measure your cholesterol. The amount of cholesterol in your blood can increase your risk of developing cardiovascular disease (CVD), which includes heart attack, stroke and peripheral vascular disease.

Cholesterol is only one risk factor for CVD. We can use the QRISK2 tool to calculate the likelihood of you having a stroke or a heart attack in the next 10 years. The higher the score, the greater the risk. The more risk factors you have, the greater your risk. You have received this leaflet because you are in a moderate or high risk group of developing CVD. The good news is however, that there are lots of things which you can do to lower your risk.

### What are the other risk factors?

Some risk factors you can control with lifestyle. Other risk factors (e.g. your age), you cannot control. Risk factors for CVD are:

- Age, sex (more common in males) and ethnicity
- Medical conditions – high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic kidney disease
- Strong family history of heart disease (in relatives under 60 years old)
- Poor diet and excessive alcohol
- Smoking
- Being overweight and lack of exercise

### What does risk mean?

Risk is the chance of something happening. Your risk of developing CVD is never zero and increases as you get older. Your QRISK score will tell you whether you are at low, moderate or high risk of developing CVD in the next 10 years.

- **Low risk = QRISK2 score of less than 10%** - this means you have less than a one in ten chance of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years
- **Moderate risk = QRISK2 score of 10-20%** - this means you have between a one to two in ten chance of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years
- **High risk = QRISK2 score of more than 20%** - this means you have at least a two in ten chance of having a stroke or heart attack in the next 10 years

### What can I do to help myself?

Things you can do:

- Stop smoking if you smoke.
- Eat a healthy diet – low in fat, sugar and salt.

- Lose weight if overweight. A healthy BMI is between 20-25.
- Take regular physical activity (aim for 150 minutes per week of moderate to intense activity e.g. 30 minutes 5 days per week of running, cycling or brisk walking).
- Drink alcohol within recommended limits (14 units per week in total).
- Take your medication to reduce blood pressure if needed.

Current NICE guidance suggests that patients with risk scores of 10% or greater should be offered the option of starting medication to lower cholesterol in addition to lifestyle changes. These medications are called statins.

### **What are statins?**

They are a group of drugs that help to lower cholesterol. In doing this they help reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Statins need to be taken long-term to be effective. It is one tablet a day which is taken at bedtime. Statins are usually safe and many patients take them without any problems. However as with any medication, unwanted side effects can occur. If you commence a statin you will need a blood test 2-3 months after starting it to check your liver function, and then once yearly after this. If you would like to discuss the option of taking a statin, please make an appointment with your GP or practice pharmacist.

### **Useful information**

British Heart Foundation [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

NICE decision aid for taking a statin: [Cardiovascular disease: risk assessment and reduction, including lipid modification \(nice.org.uk\)](https://www.nice.org.uk/decision-aids/cvdrisk/cvdrisk-2014)

Has useful information and booklets. For example understanding cholesterol: [www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications/heart-conditions/understanding-cholesterol](http://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications/heart-conditions/understanding-cholesterol)

There are also leaflets on topics such as blood pressure and eating better.

If you have any questions about your QRISK you can discuss these with your GP or practice pharmacist. Any questions about lifestyle changes can be discussed with our in-house Health and Wellbeing Team. Our Health and Wellbeing Team can help support you make healthy lifestyle changes. They are non-medical and cannot discuss your clinical diagnosis.