

Cardiac rehab

A booklet for patients, their families and carers



We would like to thank all the people who contributed to this booklet.

© Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network
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This booklet can be photocopied to be used in the NHS in Scotland.

Contents

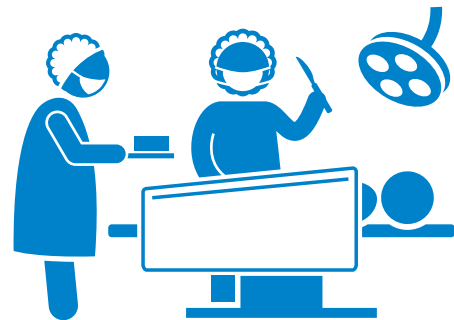
Who is this booklet for?	1
What is this booklet about?	3
What is cardiac rehab?	4
How do I get cardiac rehab?	6
What is cardiac rehab assessment?	8
How can I get support to help myself?	11
How might I feel after my diagnosis?	20
Can cardiac rehab help me about returning to work?	24
What information should I receive?	25
Where can I find out more?	27
How are SIGN guidelines produced?	34

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for patients, carers and family members of people who have been diagnosed with heart disease. It will be helpful if:



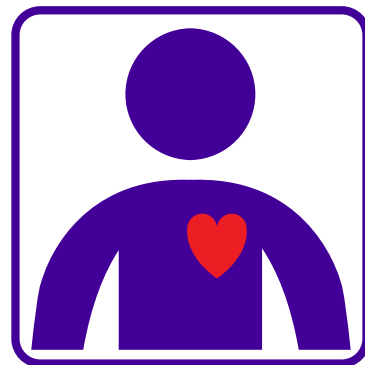
you've had a heart attack



you've had heart surgery



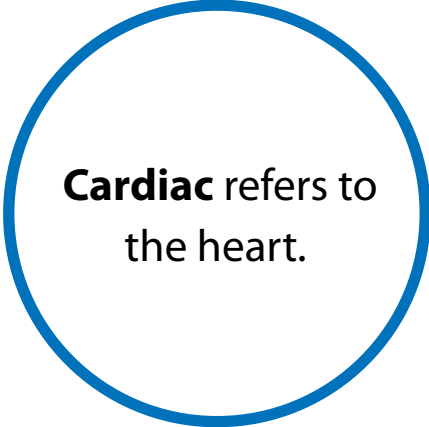
you've had a procedure such as coronary angioplasty or an implanted cardiac defibrillator



you have angina or heart failure

The booklet explains:

- what **cardiac** rehabilitation is
- how you can get cardiac rehab
- what happens at your cardiac rehab assessment
- how you can get support to help prevent future cardiac events
- how you might feel after your diagnosis
- returning to work, and
- where to find out more about cardiac rehab.



Cardiac refers to
the heart.

What is this booklet about?

This booklet explains the recommendations in a clinical guideline, produced by the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN), about:

- getting referred and assessed for cardiac rehab, and
- how you can get support to help yourself to recover and manage your condition.

It gives you information about the care you are likely to get but does not give information about specific heart conditions. You can read more about how you can manage your specific heart condition in one of our other booklets on our website www.sign.ac.uk/patient-publications.html

On pages 27 to 33 we give details of support organisations and other places where you can get more information about cardiac rehab. The clinical guideline is based on what we know from current research. It also gives advice based on the opinion of healthcare professionals who are trained on how best to care for you. On page 34 you can find more about us at SIGN and how we produce guidelines.

There are three different types of recommendation in this booklet.



Strong

recommendation

based on good-quality
research evidence



Recommendation

based on the
research evidence



Recommendation

based on clinical
experience

To see the clinical guideline, please visit

www.sign.ac.uk/sign-150-cardiac-rehabilitation.html

What is cardiac rehab?

Cardiac rehab (or cardiac rehabilitation) means all activities that are known to help and support people in taking responsibility for their health. It aims to inform, educate and reassure people that with the right support, they can understand and take control of their condition.

There is evidence that this may help to reduce the chance of admission to hospital with a future cardiac event.

Based on individual need, cardiac rehab offers a wide range of options to aid recovery and support you in managing your health condition for yourself.

“Since having a life-threatening heart problem 12 years ago I have worked in partnership with nurses, GPs, consultants, dieticians and others to better understand why I had a cardiac event and to minimise the possibility of it happening again.

I discussed my medication to understand why I took it and what side effects it might have and I found out how to eat and drink sensibly and the importance of exercise in maintaining good health.

As a result of my experience I would strongly advise others to have a partnership relationship with those in the NHS who look after their health, to listen and act on their advice and to better manage their condition as a result.” **Patient, NHS Tayside**

“I was able to learn more about all aspects of my condition (emotional, physical as well as the future dos and don’ts). I could meet and chat to people who have been through the same thing as me and exercise at a level appropriate to my physical condition under the guidance of the rehab team, all with a few laughs and a bit of fun along the way. Simply first class and I could not recommend it enough.” [Patient, NHS Lanarkshire](#)

“It has enormous value with regard to the wellbeing of patients from the initial health check at the beginning of the session, to all the varied exercises and the relaxation time at the end. As patients we are given splendid encouragement to get the most benefit from the cardiac sessions.” [Patient, Dumfries and Galloway](#)

“The cardiac rehab service has helped to restore my ability to resume many of the activities I was able to perform prior to my heart attack. The cardiac rehab staff are doing an excellent job. My exercise programme is well constructed, well demonstrated and well supervised. I have found it very beneficial.”

[Patient, South Glasgow and Renfrewshire](#)

How do I get cardiac rehab?

Most people will be referred automatically to their local **cardiac rehab team** after their diagnosis. If you haven't heard from your local team by about two weeks after your diagnosis, speak to your GP or nurse in your local medical centre. They will refer you to your local cardiac rehab team if it is appropriate.



When you are referred, the **cardiac rehab team** will carry out an assessment to develop a care plan, in partnership with you, which is specific to your needs.

Your **cardiac rehab team** may include a wide range of health care professionals such as a cardiac rehab nurse and physiotherapist.





Information

Your cardiac rehab team should explain what cardiac rehab is and give you a contact number for the team.



Information

You can write down the contact number for cardiac rehab here.

“I have gone from being in shock and the medical side of things running away with me to total control and understanding everything from what happened to what my medications are doing. We have goals and encouragement along with exercise and the belief that our health can be better than before our illnesses if we continue with the advice given.”

Patient, Dumfries and Galloway

The information gathered at this assessment will allow the team to ensure that, in partnership with you, you get the safest and most appropriate care plan and a list of goals to achieve.

What is cardiac rehab assessment?

The rehab team will invite you to an assessment appointment to explore the next steps in your recovery. This appointment is important as it will help you and the team to understand what has happened and how you have been since your diagnosis.

What will happen at my assessment?

At your assessment, the cardiac rehab team will explain what happened and ask how you've been feeling since your diagnosis. They will discuss the following with you.

- Your understanding of what has happened to you and your diagnosis.
- How you have been since your diagnosis.
- Tests and investigations you've already had or are waiting for.
- Medication you are taking and why this may be adjusted during cardiac rehab.
- Risk factors for cardiac events and how you can change your lifestyle to prevent future cardiac events.

"Having someone take the time to explain test results and the function of the numerous prescribed drugs helped to make me feel more in control of my situation." **Patient, NHS Tayside**



Recommendation based on clinical experience

Your cardiac rehab team will work with you. They will use the information gathered at your assessment to help support you with your care plan and achieving your list of goals. Your rehab team will meet you regularly to discuss:

- how you are generally
- how you're progressing with your goals, and
- any problems you are having.

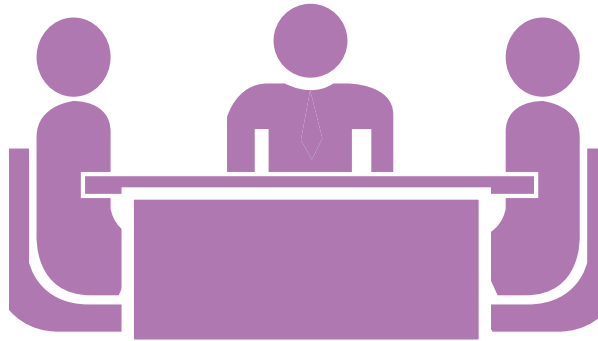


With your permission, your cardiac rehab team may also involve your family and carers in your care. It can be helpful for family members and carers to hear the information and advice you get so they can also give support in your recovery.





Your cardiac rehab team will also look out for the wellbeing of your family and carers, who may be having difficulty coping. They may suggest carer support groups to help them cope.



Recommendation based on clinical experience

To make sure you are as well as you can be, any other conditions you have should be considered at your assessment. This helps to make sure your treatment plan is right for you.



Recommendation based on clinical experience

Cardiac rehab will be tailored to suit your and your family's needs. It should consider any religious, ethnic or cultural needs you have.



How can I get support to help myself?

You will get support to make lifestyle changes to improve your health and wellbeing and help prevent a future cardiac event. There are details of where you can find out more about making lifestyle changes on pages 27 to 33.




“It helped to learn what I could do to change my lifestyle. With support from the team, I have stopped smoking, and eat a healthy diet now. My whole family have changed their lifestyle because of my heart problem so we are all much healthier.”

Patient, NHS Forth Valley

“We had speakers on a range of topics which were quite interesting.” Patient, NHS Lanarkshire

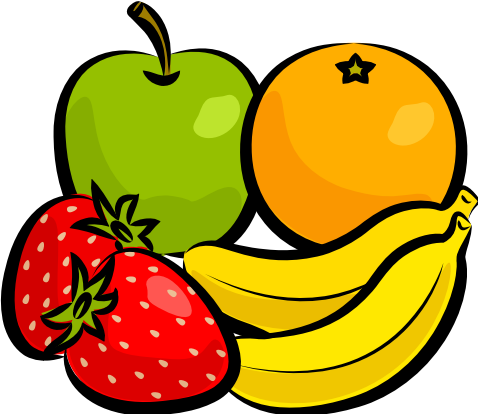





What you can do	What the cardiac team can do for you
<p data-bbox="151 315 726 365">If you smoke, you should stop.</p> 	 <p data-bbox="815 414 1401 515">You should be offered support to stop smoking.</p> <p data-bbox="815 544 1414 696">This support should last more than four weeks to increase the chance of success.</p> <p data-bbox="815 725 1437 878">Support may include various approaches including telephone or face-to-face contact (or both).</p> <p data-bbox="815 907 1406 1059">Education and information will be given in various ways to support this goal.</p>

"It's good to meet others and talk about what's going on. Gym is very good, it makes you feel better and fitter and it's helped me to stop smoking." *Patient, Greater Glasgow and Clyde.*


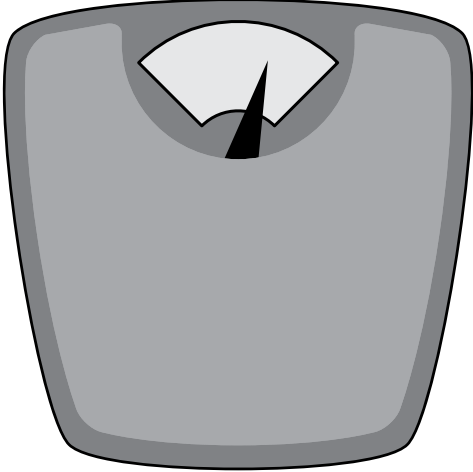

What you can do	What the cardiac team can do for you
<p data-bbox="408 315 485 389"></p> <p data-bbox="150 416 735 730">Increase your activity levels. Being active can help to improve your overall health and wellbeing, reduce hospital readmission and improve your quality of life.</p> 	<p data-bbox="1059 315 1136 389"></p> <p data-bbox="815 416 1310 512">You should be offered the following.</p> <ul data-bbox="831 557 1394 999" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="831 557 1254 600">• Activity assessment. <li data-bbox="831 633 1394 999">• An activity plan that suits your ability and takes into account your diagnosis and personal choices. This may happen at different places including hospital or in the community. <div data-bbox="826 1046 1434 1397" style="border: 2px solid purple; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p data-bbox="863 1081 1382 1305">“First impressions of supervised exercise were quite intimidating and I felt a bit daft.”</p> <p data-bbox="863 1323 1326 1364">Patient, NHS Lanarkshire</p> </div>

“Personally I enjoyed exercising and to be able to use the facilities under supervision gives you some peace of mind just in case. Also there’s the support aspect whereby you can discuss your condition with other participants if you want.”

Patient, South Glasgow and Renfrewshire

What you can do	What the cardiac team can do for you
 <p>Eat a healthy balanced diet such as a Mediterranean diet where the main sources of added fat are olive oil and unsalted nuts (in moderation).</p> <p>It can help to prevent cardiovascular disease. </p> <p>Aim to eat less than 6g of salt each day. </p> <p>Eat more fruit and vegetables. </p> <p>You can use the Eatwell Guide at the back of this booklet to help you choose foods that are lower in saturated fat, sugar and salt. </p>	 <p>Your cardiac rehab team can support you in various ways to help you eat a healthy balanced diet.</p> <div data-bbox="893 672 1380 1153"> <p>A Mediterranean diet is rich in vegetables, fruits, nuts, beans, cereal grains, olive oil and fish. It is low in red meat.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="893 1209 1380 1691"> <p>Saturated fat is found in foods that come from animal sources, such as butter, full-fat milk, cheese and meat.</p> </div>

“I cook all my own meals now and have a ready meal for a treat at the weekend.” *Patient, NHS Forth Valley*

What you can do	What the cardiac team can do for you
<p data-bbox="395 322 470 394"></p> <p data-bbox="150 416 762 510">Keep your weight within normal limits.</p> <p data-bbox="150 544 775 696">On pages 30-31 we give details of where you can get more information about losing weight.</p> 	<p data-bbox="1054 322 1129 394"></p> <p data-bbox="815 416 1428 622">The team will consider referring you to weight-loss programmes run by experts if you need some this kind of help.</p>

It is better to cook meals you prepare yourself. If you do buy processed foods, always check the label for the fat, salt and sugar content. Choose foods that are low in these things.

What you can do	What the cardiac team can do for you
<p>Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.</p>  <p>When you pour a drink at home, it's usually far more than you'd get in a pub.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Men and women are advised not to drink regularly more than 14 units per week.• This helps to reduce to a low level the health risks of drinking alcohol.• If you do drink as much as 14 units a week, it's best to spread it evenly over three days or more.• Binge drinking is not advisable. It can increase your risks in a various ways that may lead to long-term illness and accidents. <p>If you wish to cut down the amount you're drinking, a good way is to have several drink-free days each week.</p>

Alcohol guidelines – what they mean for you



HM Government

The number of **units** you are drinking depends on the **size** and **strength** of your drink

2.8% ABV lager

4.8% ABV lager

0.8 units



1.4 units

284ml half pint

1.2 units



2.1 units

440ml can

1.6 units



2.7 units

568ml pint

1.8 units



3.2 units

660ml bottle

ABV: alcohol by volume

Alcohol guidelines – what they mean for you



HM Government

The number of **units** you are drinking depends on the **size** and **strength** of your drink

11% ABV wine

14% ABV wine

1.4 units



1.8 units

125ml glass

1.9 units



2.5 units

175ml glass

2.8 units



3.5 units

250ml glass

8.3 units



10.5 units

750ml bottle

ABV: alcohol by volume



After your cardiac rehab has finished, it's important to continue with regular exercise and maintain a healthy lifestyle. This will continue to improve your overall health and wellbeing and help to prevent a cardiac event in future.



"I feel that this has made a significant contribution to my recovery and that I will continue to benefit from the advice and encouragement of the staff." **Patient, Shetland**

How might I feel after my diagnosis?

It's normal to experience such emotions as fear, anger and anxiety. And it's also normal to have feelings of stress and worry that you never felt before.

Some of these feelings will pass naturally. Others may continue to be a problem and delay your recovery. Cardiac rehab can help to support you through this.

The organisations listed on pages 27 to 33 can also put you in touch with people who can help.

“Great to be able to talk to people with the same condition most importantly to be able to laugh while enjoying the company and exercising. It was nice that everyone understood if you were feeling low or on a high without having to say.” *Patient, Orkney*



Recommendation based on clinical experience

During your cardiac rehab, you will be assessed regularly for anxiety and depression using various questionnaires. Monitoring your emotional and mental health will help make sure that any symptoms are treated so you can get back to your usual activities.



Strong recommendation based on good-quality research evidence

If you and your cardiac team think it's appropriate, you may be referred for **psychological support** to help with stress management, anxiety and depression.

If you are feeling depressed, you may think negatively about situations. This may make returning to your usual activities difficult.

Psychological support can help you cope with your day-to-day life and help with your recovery. It is offered by people who are trained in therapies and have experience of working with people as part of their cardiac rehab.

"With psychological help I have learned how to cope better and life seems more bearable."

Patient, Greater Glasgow and Clyde



Strong recommendation based on good-quality research evidence

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) should be offered to you if you are experiencing depression or anxiety.



Recommendation based on the research evidence

If you are having symptoms of stress or anxiety after your diagnosis, **cognitive behavioural therapy** may help you control them, so it may be offered to you.

Cognitive behavioural therapy

can help you cope with your situation. It involves working with a therapist who will help you challenge unhelpful thoughts and behaviour.



Recommendation based on the research evidence

A supervised course of relaxation therapy should be considered to help you manage stress and help prevent you having a cardiac event in future.

Learning to relax can help with your physical and emotional recovery. For example, it can:

- help lower blood pressure and cholesterol
- decrease feelings of stress, irritability, frustration and physical tension
- improve your mood
- help you sleep better
- help you cope better with everyday problems, such as work, money worries, difficult relationships and muscular pain, and
- help overcome unhelpful habits, such as smoking.

Relaxation therapy teaches you how to let go of tension in body and mind. It can help you to feel peaceful and calm, and can help your muscles to feel relaxed.

Can cardiac rehab help me about returning to work?

Early in your rehab you should be able to talk to someone about getting back to work if this is right for you.

Cardiac rehab helps you improve your overall health and wellbeing including activity and fitness levels. This will then help you feel more confident about returning to work.

Your cardiac team will support you to decide when you are fit enough to return to work and will plan this with you.

“The cardiac rehab service is very useful in that it monitors your progress and keeps you up to date with your fitness levels and helps you in your quest to get back to work as soon as possible, without rushing back too early. I feel it is giving me my confidence back that I had lost and is helping me interact in a positive way. I think it’s a move in the right direction.”

Patient, Greater Glasgow and Clyde



Recommendation based on clinical experience

If appropriate, you should be able to return to work while you are attending cardiac rehab.

What information should I receive?

Throughout your cardiac rehab, your cardiac team should make sure you have information in a format that suits you.



Information

Throughout your rehab, your cardiac team should do the following.

- Discuss the impact of your diagnosis on your emotional wellbeing.
- Advise you on the purpose of medication to prevent you having a future cardiac event.
- Explain the importance of taking your medication and how it is managed.
- Discuss any future treatments, procedures and follow-up appointments.
- Offer further information such as booklets from the British Heart Foundation or Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland.

“Prior to starting my rehabilitation with the cardiac team I had a lot of anxiety towards restarting a programme of exercise. Their information and guidance were paramount to where I am now in terms of the choices I make which contribute to my lifestyle and wellbeing.” *Patient, Greater Glasgow and Clyde*



Information

You can tell your team how you would prefer to get information. They should offer the following formats.

- Face-to-face conversation.
- Telephone conversation.
- Online.
- Written.



Information

Across Scotland, cardiac support groups work with various charities such as Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland (CHSS).

These self-help groups are run by people with experience of heart disease. You and your family may find it helpful to meet and talk to people who have gone through similar experiences. You can refer yourself to one of these support groups if your cardiac team hasn't already done so. Support groups can give you and your family and friends:

- emotional and social support
- help with rehab through a structured exercise programme
- advice on preventing future cardiac events, and
- information and education.

Where can I find out more?

NHS inform

NHS inform provides a health and care information service for the people of Scotland, including information on over 850 medical conditions such as heart failure, high blood pressure, depression and diabetes.

Phone: 0800 22 44 88 (8am–10pm)

www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/heart-and-blood-vessels

Email: nhs.inform@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk

Organisations that help with heart disease

British Heart Foundation (BHF)

The BHF is the nation's heart charity and the largest independent funder of cardiovascular research. The BHF provides vital information for patients and carers. To speak to one of its cardiac nurses for advice and support, call its helpline. To order any of its publications, visit <http://bhf.org.uk/publications> or

Phone: 0870 600 6566 or email hearthelpline@bhf.org.uk

Phone: 020 7554 0000 • Heart Helpline: 0300 330 3311

www.bhf.org.uk

Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland (CHSS)

This health charity has been set up to improve the quality of life for people in Scotland affected by chest, heart and stroke illness through research, influencing public policy, advice and information, and support in the community.

Phone: 0131 225 6963

Advice Line Nurses: 0808 801 0899 (9.30am–4pm, Monday to Friday) free from landlines and mobiles

www.chss.org.uk

Email: admin@chss.org.uk

Local support groups and telephone helplines

NHS inform

Phone: 0800 22 44 88 (8am–10pm)

To find local support, visit the Support Service Directory on the NHS inform website.

www.nhsinform.scot/national-service-directory

Smokeline

Phone: 0800 84 84 84 (Monday to Friday 8am–10pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am–5pm)

www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/helplines/smokeline

Other websites

Action on Depression

Action on Depression can refer people to local support. They provide advice and information on low mood and depression.

www.actionondepression.org

Email: admin@actionondepression.org

Active Scotland

This website gives information and ideas on a range of indoor and outdoor activities in Scotland.

www.activescotland.org.uk

Blood Pressure UK

This charity is dedicated to lowering people's blood pressure to prevent disability and death from stroke and heart disease.

Phone: 020 7882 6218

www.bloodpressureuk.org

Email: help@bloodpressureuk.org

Breathing Space

Breathing Space is a free, confidential phone and web-based service for anyone who is experiencing low mood or depression, or who is unusually worried and in need of someone to talk to.

Phone: 0800 83 85 87 weekdays: Monday to Wednesday 6pm to 2am the following morning • Thursday 6pm to Friday 2am
• weekend: Friday 6pm to Monday 6am

www.breathingspace.scot

Diabetes UK

Diabetes UK provides information, advice and support to help people with diabetes manage the condition well, and bring people together for support when it's needed most.

Phone: (Careline Scotland) 0141 212 8710

www.diabetes.org.uk

Email: careline.scotland@diabetes.org.uk

Useful publications and resources

We don't accept responsibility for the content of the listed websites.

Exercise

Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland: Just move!

www.chss.org.uk/documents/2013/08/f30_just_move_web.pdf

British Heart Foundation: Staying active

www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/preventing-heart-disease/staying-active

Diabetes UK: Getting active and staying active

www.diabetes.org.uk/keeping-active

Age UK: Keeping fit

www.ageuk.org.uk/health-wellbeing/keeping-fit/

Weight

NHS choices: 12 tips to help you lose weight on the 12-week plan

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/weight-loss-guide/Pages/successful-diet-tips.aspx

Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland: Losing weight

www.chss.org.uk/documents/2013/12/losing-weight.pdf

Diabetes UK: What's your healthy weight?

www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/Enjoy-food/Eating-with-diabetes/Whats-your-healthy-weight/

British Heart Foundation: 6 tips on losing weight

www.bhf.org.uk/heart-matters-magazine/my-story/weight-loss/weight-loss-tips

Weight Concern UK

www.weightconcern.org.uk/

Smoking

NHS inform

www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/stopping-smoking/help-to-stop/local-help

NHS choices: 10 self-help tips to stop smoking

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/smoking/Pages/Motivateyourself.aspx

Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland: Stopping smoking

www.chss.org.uk/documents/2013/08/f1_stop_smoking-pdf.pdf

Food and eating well

NHS: the Eatwell Guide

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx

Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland: Healthy eating

www.chss.org.uk/documents/2013/08/f24_healthy_eating.pdf

Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland: salt

www.chss.org.uk/documents/2013/08/f2_salt-pdf.pdf

British Heart Foundation: 10 minutes to change your life–time to eat well

www.bhf.org.uk/publications/healthy-eating-and-drinking/10-minutes-to-change-your-life---time-to-eat-well

British Heart Foundation: Eating well

www.bhf.org.uk/publications/healthy-eating-and-drinking/eating-well

British Heart Foundation: This label could change your life

www.bhf.org.uk/publications/healthy-eating-and-drinking/this-label-could-change-your-life

Alcohol

British Heart Foundation: 10 minutes to change your life – call time on alcohol

www.bhf.org.uk/publications/healthy-eating-and-drinking/10-minutes-to-change-your-life---call-time-on-alcohol

Drink Aware: how to stop drinking alcohol completely

www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/how-to-reduce-your-drinking/how-to-cut-down/how-to-stop-drinking-alcohol-completely/

NHS Choices: Tips on cutting down

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Tipsoncuttingdown.aspx

Alcoholics Anonymous

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/

Alcohol Concern

www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/Pages/Category/apps-and-tools

MIND addiction and dependency resources

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/addiction-and-dependency/#.WVYn3YVpfoA

How are SIGN guidelines produced?

Our guidelines are based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. We read research papers to find evidence for the best way to diagnose, treat and care for patients. If we cannot find this out from the research evidence, we ask healthcare professionals to use their clinical experience and judgment to suggest treatments.



1 Gather lived experience



2 Identify the questions



3 Search for the evidence



4 Look at the evidence



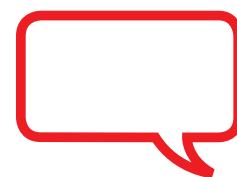
5 Make judgements & recommendations



6 Ask people for feedback



7 Publish



8 Let everybody know about our guidelines

You can read more about us by visiting www.sign.ac.uk or you can phone **0131 623 4720** and ask for a copy of our booklet 'SIGN guidelines: information for patients, carers and the public'.

The Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) writes guidelines which give advice for healthcare professionals, patients and carers about the best treatments that are available.

We write these guidelines by working with healthcare professionals, other NHS staff, patients, carers and members of the public.

We are happy to consider requests for other languages or formats. Please phone **0131 623 4720** or email sign@sign.ac.uk

Eatwell Guide

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy	Fat	Saturated	Sugars	Salt
104kcal 250kcal	3.0g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
13%	4%	7%	38%	15%

of an adult's reference intake
Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars



Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.
Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.



Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS



Eat less often and in small amounts

www.sign.ac.uk



www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org

Edinburgh Office

Gyle Square | 1 South Gyle Crescent | Edinburgh EH12 9E
Telephone 0131 623 4300

Glasgow Office

Delta House | 50 West Nile Street | Glasgow | G1 2NP
Telephone 0141 225 6999

The Healthcare Environment Inspectorate, the Scottish Health Council, the Scottish Health Technologies Group, the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) and the Scottish Medicines Consortium are key components of our organisation.

