

TICKER NEWS

Official newsletter of the North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation & Aftercare Charity



Is your cholesterol on target?

High cholesterol is one of the key risk factors for heart attack and stroke. But as Cardiac Rehabilitation Nurse Specialist/Team Leader **Helen O’Leary** explains, there are steps we can all take to keep our levels in check

If you have high cholesterol, you can develop fatty deposits inside your artery walls. When these affect the blood vessels supplying the heart it’s known as Cardiovascular Disease (CVD). These deposits build up over time, clogging your arteries and reducing the flow of oxygen-rich blood to your heart. This can result in symptoms such as angina or pain in your lower legs. And if a piece of this fatty material breaks away from the artery wall it can cause a blood clot, leading to a life-threatening heart attack or stroke.

Common medical terms for high cholesterol are hypercholesterolaemia or hyperlipidaemia, and if you’ve been told you have either of these, or CVD, it’s vital that you keep your levels in line with the new recommended targets (*see table on page 2*). This slows disease

progression (*see diagrams on page 2*) and reduces your risk of heart attack or stroke.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a blood fat that is naturally produced in our livers. We all need some cholesterol: it helps keep cells healthy, and our bodies use it to make Vitamin D, which we need for strong bones, teeth and muscles.

But cholesterol levels can also be affected by diet and lifestyle. And in the UK, levels tend to be higher than in other countries because many of us eat too much fatty food, smoke, don’t exercise enough, are overweight and drink too much alcohol.

In Mediterranean countries and Japan, where people tend to eat less saturated fat (found in fatty meats and dairy products) and fewer trans fats (used in

highly processed foods such as biscuits, crisps, pizzas and cereal bars) they have lower cholesterol levels and, as a result, lower levels of heart disease and stroke.

For some people, though, high cholesterol is an inherited condition, with their livers either producing too much cholesterol or not processing it fast enough to maintain normal levels (*see celebrity chef Sat Bains’ story on page 2-3*). These conditions need monitoring and treatment through a specialist lipid clinic, such as the one at Newport’s Royal Gwent Hospital.

Natural ways to lower your cholesterol

A few tweaks to your diet and lifestyle can make a big difference to your cholesterol levels. Try swapping highly processed foods for a more Mediterranean-style diet based on vegetables, fruit, pulses, >>

Looking for a fresh challenge?

We’re looking for one or more members to take on a new “Expert by Experience” volunteer role for the charity. A key part of the role will be attending some of the Education sessions of Phase 3 Cardiac Rehab Programmes at hospitals across North Gwent.

You’ll be expected to share your personal experience of living with a heart condition, and to promote the benefits of attending our long-term cardiac rehab exercise classes. You’ll need

to be friendly, punctual and reliable, with your own transport (mileage paid at 45p/mile). Training will be provided by the Aneurin Bevan University Hospital Board, with the time commitment after training expected to be around two hours a month.

If you’d like to know more, please see the volunteer profile on our website – cardiac-rehab.org.uk/resources. Or contact Jacky Miles on 07484 658 319, or on info@cardiac-rehab.org.uk.

Image:
Freepik



<< beans, nuts, seeds, wholegrains and olive oil. You can also include some dairy (milk and natural yogurt), along with lean protein such as chicken, eggs and fish.

Keeping active can also help reduce your cholesterol levels. Our exercise classes are a great start, but aim to do at least 30 minutes' exercise five days a week.

Effective medications

The first-line treatment for most people is statins – atorvastatin, simvastatin,

pravastatin or rosuvastatin. These drugs are usually very effective, and there's no doubt they save lives. Like all medication though, they can cause side effects, with muscle pain a problem for some people.

The good news is there are other drugs you can try, such as ezetimibe, which targets bad LDL cholesterol and is generally well tolerated. You may also be prescribed fibrates, which help reduce triglycerides (another type of blood fat), or bempedoic acid, which slows

cholesterol production in the liver. You may need a combination of these drugs to keep your cholesterol levels in check.

Meanwhile, for people with inherited high cholesterol, two new treatments are available – icosapent ethyl (Vazkepa®) and PCSK9 inhibitors. These drugs are expensive though and can only be prescribed by a lipid clinic.

► For more information on managing your cholesterol, got to heartuk.org.uk.

CVD progression over time



Healthy artery



Cholesterol build-up in artery



Narrowed artery blocked by blood clot

NEW CHOLESTEROL TARGETS

Make sure you know your numbers!

If you're taking cholesterol-lowering drugs you should be offered a cholesterol test every year. Don't be afraid to ask your GP surgery for your most recent results, as knowing your numbers can help you make decisions about your lifestyle and medication.

You may notice your results look a little different to previous tests. That's because new measurements have been introduced, along with new lower targets for people who've had a heart attack or been diagnosed with CVD. You'll find the new target numbers, measured in mmol/L (millimoles per litre of blood) in our handy table, right.

| Test report abbreviation | What it means | Target if you've had a heart attack or have CVD | Target for everyone else |
|--------------------------|--|---|----------------------------------|
| TC | Total amount of all cholesterol in your blood | Below 4 | 5 or less |
| HDL cholesterol | High Density Lipoprotein (good cholesterol) | 1.4 | Men: above 1 Women: above 1.2 |
| LDL cholesterol | Low Density Lipoprotein (bad cholesterol) | Below 1.4 | Below 3 |
| Non-HDL cholesterol | Total cholesterol minus HDL cholesterol (ie total of all types of bad cholesterol) | Below 3 | Below 4 |
| TC:HDL ratio | Total cholesterol divided by HDL cholesterol | Below 4 | Below 6 |

SOURCE: Heart UK (heartuk.org.uk)

Sat's recipe for healthy living



Celebrated Nottingham chef **Sat Bains** reveals how surviving a massive heart attack three years ago has led him to radically rethink his diet and lifestyle

Sat Bains is a man used to being in control. His mantra is “be the best”, and his acclaimed Nottingham restaurant with rooms has held two Michelin stars since 2011. He's known for creating complex tasting menus brimming with punchy seasonal flavours, and physically he's no slouch either, with the kind of muscles you only get from years of dedicated fitness training. But the one thing he can't control is an inherited tendency to high cholesterol due to his South Asian heritage.

“I knew I had high cholesterol all through my 30s and 40s, but I've always been into fitness, and I was careful with my weight, so I assumed it wasn't a problem,” he says.

But then, shortly after his 50th birthday, during a weights workout with his personal trainer, he felt a sharp pain in his chest. He assumed it was muscular and “pushed through” to complete the session, but as the day wore on the pain shifted to

Sat's Lamb Chops with Harissa (pictured below left)

"This recipe blows my mind because it is the easiest thing in the world – you just need a freezer bag, a jar of harissa and some olive oil, then seal and shake the bag and leave to chill for 3 hours."

Serves 2

75g (3oz) rose harissa (I like Belazu)

25g (1oz) extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to serve

6 lamb chops, French trimmed to remove the fat Zest and juice of 1 lemon

Small handful of mint leaves, torn

Equipment | 1 large sealable freezer bag | Barbecue

1. Place the harissa and olive oil in the freezer bag, add the lamb chops, seal and massage to coat the lamb. Transfer to the fridge to marinate for 3 hours.

2. Get your barbecue ready when you take the lamb out of the fridge; this will allow the lamb to come up to temperature while the barbecue is heating up. Remove the chops from the bag and cook for 4–5 minutes on each side.

3. Remove from the heat and drizzle with more olive oil and the lemon juice, and scatter over the lemon zest and torn mint.

► Sat Bains' *Eat to Your Heart's Content* (Octopus Books, £26) is available to buy online and from all good bookshops. Buy a ticket in our Summer Prize Draw (see page 4) and you could win your very own copy!



his eye socket and then jaw. It was only when the pain spread to his arm – the classic sign of a heart attack – that he called 999.

Sat later discovered that a cholesterol-clogged artery had ruptured during his workout and that the subsequent blood clot had all but blocked the main arteries supplying his heart. Doctors performed an emergency triple bypass and Sat was in hospital for 10 days.

"That kind of heart attack is known as a widow-maker, and the doctors said I only survived it because I was so fit. It was a real wake-up call."

A TOUGH TRANSITION

Sat left hospital a shadow of his former self; he'd lost 17kg and was so weak he could scarcely walk a circuit of his kitchen table. Worse still, he'd completely lost his appetite and found himself reliant on others for even basic tasks.

It was a tough transition. But Sat is a man used to hard work and discipline, and he applied the same rigour to his recovery, listening to hundreds of hours of medical and motivational podcasts and calling on various experts for advice.

One of these was Dr Neil Williams, Senior Lecturer in Exercise Physiology and Nutrition at Nottingham Trent University. "Neil had helped me when I was training for a trek to Everest base camp back in 2015, so I knew he'd give me good advice."

The result was a total overhaul of his diet. Previously he'd followed a high-protein, high-fat, "keto" regime with very few carbs, thinking it suited his 100mph lifestyle. But under Neil's guidance he switched to a low-cholesterol Mediterranean diet, eating a rainbow of fruit and veg, adding nuts and seeds, pulses, olive oil, seafood and oily fish. He still enjoys red meat, but these days opts for leaner cuts (as with the French-trimmed lamb chops in the deliciously easy recipe above), and less often.

THE HEALING POWER OF GOOD FOOD

"For me as a chef, flavour has always been the driving force. But after my heart attack I began to see that good food is also the biggest healer." With that in mind, he asked Neil to collaborate

with him on a new cookbook. Sat devising the recipe, drawing on his nutritional insights, it features his top 10 heart-healthy foods (see below). Called *Eat To Your Heart's Content*, it's refreshingly un-preachy and full of useful

"The key," says Sat, "is not to take anything off the table, but to aim to eat a wide variety of food that's as close to natural as possible. With packaged and processed foods I always read the label: if the ingredients list anything I don't use in my own kitchen, I tend to avoid it."

MODERATION IS A GOOD THING

Not that Sat's a saint. "My dad ran a sweet shop when I was growing up, and I could easily down a 200g block of Dairy Milk every day. But now I limit myself to an occasional Freddo."

Three years on from his heart attack, Sat reckons he's as fit as he's ever been. "The doctors are really pleased with my recovery. Exercise is still very important to me, but now I combine weights and cardio with more functional fitness to improve my balance and core stability, and keep me flexible as I get older. And I aim for a solid eight hours' sleep a night.

"I realise now that my heart attack wasn't due to one single factor: it was an accumulation of things: smoking until I was 30; ignoring my cholesterol levels and family history; eating too much fat; not getting enough sleep... I definitely haven't become a monk, but I have learned that moderation is a good thing!"

TOP 10 HEART HEALTHY FOODS

- Veg & fruit
- Oats & barley
- Beans & pulses
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Oily fish
- Nuts & seeds
- Soya beans/soya products
- Shellfish
- Lean meat
- Spices & herbs

Fundraising roundup

Queens at the Kings raffle A big thank you to Ashella for organising the fabulous fundraising raffle at the cheeky “Queens at the Kings” Ladies Night in Abergavenny back in May. The raffle raised a magnificent £500 for us!

Tennis social Thanks also to the Crickhowell Tennis Club (and our Instructor Helen Sanchez who’s a member) for supporting us with a fundraising social match earlier this summer. The event netted us a very welcome £62.50!

Potato Challenge Thanks again to our Challenge sponsors the Abergavenny Garden Centre for hosting the Weigh-in back in June. And congratulations to our green-fingered winners:



Adult class

- **1st prize:** Tom & Barbara Anstey, Tregare – 1,072g (£20 voucher)
- **2nd prize:** Jenny & Lewis Morgan, on behalf of Morgan & Horowskyj architects, Abergavenny – 1,054g (£15 voucher)

Children’s Class

- **1st prize:** Poppy Harper, Raglan – 840g (£10 voucher)
- **2nd prize:** Megan Baldwin, Little Mill – 733g (£5 voucher)

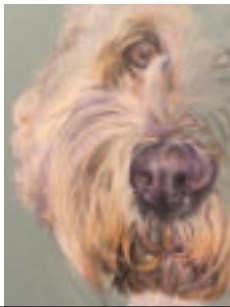
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Summer Prize Draw

Our Summer Prize Draw is brimming with great prizes, thanks to the generosity of our donors! **Tickets cost £1 each**, and are available now from Class Assistant Allen Cleveland and members of our fundraising committee. The draw will take place at midday on Sunday 29 September at our Love Your Heart sponsored walk (see below).

The full prize list will be available at our classes, but to whet your appetite you could win a bespoke pet portrait from local artist Jude Lowery (see example, right), £100 Amazon voucher, Bollinger Champagne gift set signed by rugby star Dan Biggar, or a copy of Sat Bains’ new cookbook, *Eat to Your Heart’s Content*. Good luck!



TRY A TRIATHLON!

Sept

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Feeling fit? Then why not challenge yourself to the beginner-friendly **Clayton Shorthouse Memorial Triathlon**, at The Ebbw Vale Sports Centre on **Sunday 1 September**. Clayton came through Phase 3 Cardiac Rehab a few years ago and was a keen runner, swimmer and cyclist. He died suddenly last year, and we’re honoured to be chosen as the beneficiary for any donations made on the day.

What to expect:

- **400m swim** (16 pool lengths) • **10km bike ride** on flat, open roads
- **2.5km run** on a pedestrian pathway with a slight gradient

Entry costs £2 for under-24s, £8 for anyone older and includes insurance. To book, visit the Sports Centre reception or call them on 01495 357 777.

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Love Your Heart sponsored walk GET YOUR STEPS IN AND HELP US RAISE MONEY!

Celebrate World Heart Day on Sunday 29 September by wearing something red and joining us for our Love Your Heart sponsored walk and family fun event at Tredegar’s lovely Parc Bryn Bach. You’ll find a sponsorship form enclosed with this newsletter.

The event starts at 10am outside the visitor centre and our heart-shaped walk route will take you around the lake on a family-friendly 2km loop. You can choose to do either one, two or

three circuits (so 2km, 4km or 6km in total), and along the way you’ll find some fun activities for the kids, including glitter face painting and a heart-themed quiz with prizes. And when you finish, make sure you get a selfie at our balloon arch and share it on your socials!

Need extra sponsorship forms? Please ask Class Assistant Allen Cleveland or your instructor. Or download one from our website – cardiac-rehab.org.uk/resources

Autumn Heart Health Awareness event & AGM

Join us from **9:45am-1pm** on **Friday 4 October** at the St John Ambulance Training Centre in Abergavenny for our Autumn Heart Health Awareness event and AGM. The event is free and open to all, with a packed programme including:

- Abergavenny local Lenny Jordan, on **adapting to sight loss**
- Clinical Nurse Specialist Amanda Prosser, on **inherited high cholesterol** (familial hypercholesterolaemia or FH)
- NHS Dietician Lucy Usher on **healthy eating for your heart**.

We’ll have a break part way through for refreshments and there’ll be plenty of time for questions after each speaker. To reserve your place, please contact our secretary Tony Lowery on 07856 692 148.

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► **STOP PRESS!** It’s all change for Callum’s Tredegar class, with a new venue – Fresh Active Gym – and a new time – 12-1p – starting 28 August. Thank you to the Ebbw Vale class for switching their time to 10:30-11:30am to allow this to happen.

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