



### 1. Get active

Physical activity enhances health and the chances of a better quality of life. On the contrary, inactivity increases the risk of both ill-health and early death.

Thirty minutes of moderate-intensity activity five times per week reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke.

- ♥ Physical activity includes all forms of organised activities as well as household chores.
- ♥ It is important to set realistic goals - building up levels of activity gradually will seem less overwhelming and is definitely safer than trying to run a marathon on the first go!
- ♥ Think how you can fit physical activity into your daily life-style e.g use the stairs instead of taking the lift; park some distance away from your destination or stop one bus stop earlier and walk that extra distance.

### 3. Say "No" to tobacco

One in every two smokers will eventually die of tobacco-related diseases. Unfortunately, children and teenagers are still taking up smoking. Second-hand smoke (tobacco smoke inhaled by non-smokers) kills more than 600,000 non-smokers world-wide every year including children. In infants, second-hand smoke can be a cause of sudden death.

Quitting smoking and avoiding second-hand smoke reduces risk of heart disease and stroke.

- ♥ It is crucial to ban smoking in your home to protect your family. Quit smoking or at least smoke outside.
- ♥ Educate children on the dangers of tobacco use, to help them choose not to start smoking.
- ♥ If you are finding it hard to stop smoking, ask your healthcare professional for advice or consider attending a smoking-cessation group organised by the Health Promotion Unit.

### 2. Eat a heart-healthy diet

We still consume too much processed food that is high in sugar, salt, saturated or trans fats.

A heart-healthy diet which is rich in fruit and vegetables helps prevent heart disease and stroke.

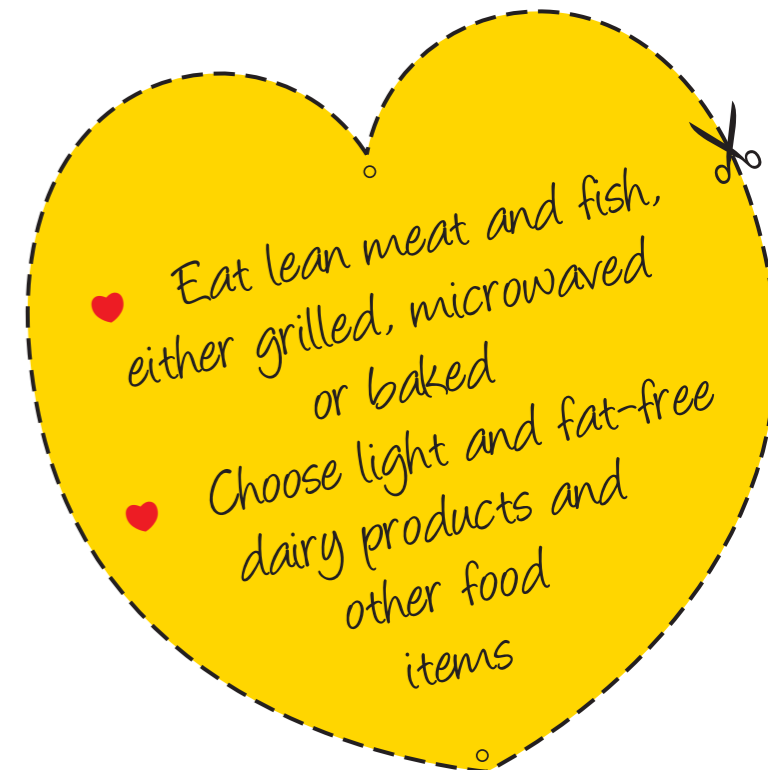
- ♥ Swap cakes and other sweets for alternative sweet treats such as strawberries and other fruits.
- ♥ Make healthy food exciting for children - choose colourful foods and involve them in the cooking.
- ♥ Avoid adding salt to food or during its preparation.
- ♥ Consider portion sizes; use smaller plates and ensure portions of local seasonal fruit and vegetables which are high in vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants. These portions should be larger than meat or starchy foods.

### 4. Know your risks

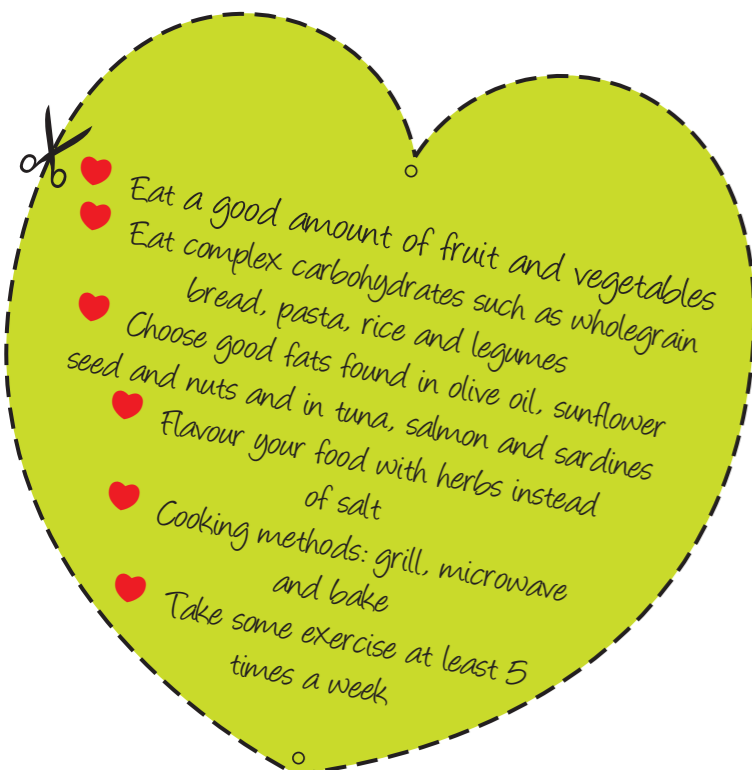
By taking the steps above, you and your family can reduce the burden of heart disease and stroke. It is important to keep a regular check on your heart health.

- ♥ Visit your doctor who can measure your blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels, weight, waist circumference and Body Mass Index (BMI).
- ♥ Speak with your doctor and nutritionist to develop a specific plan of action to improve your heart health. Make this action plan clearly visible in your home as a reminder!

**Suggestion:** Cut out the 4 hearts on the leaflet side flaps. Place them somewhere as a gentle reminder of how to take care of your heart and of those you love!



- ♥ Eat lean meat and fish, either grilled, microwaved or baked
- ♥ Choose light and fat-free dairy products and other food items



- ♥ Eat a good amount of fruit and vegetables
- ♥ Eat complex carbohydrates such as wholegrain bread, pasta, rice and legumes
- ♥ Choose good fats found in olive oil, sunflower seed and nuts and in tuna, salmon and sardines
- ♥ Flavour your food with herbs instead of salt
- ♥ Cooking methods: grill, microwave and bake
- ♥ Take some exercise at least 5 times a week



- ♥ Limit your salt intake
- ♥ Limit your sugar intake
- ♥ Limit saturated & trans fats
- ♥ Avoid fried food
- ♥ Do not smoke
- ♥ Limit your alcohol intake and avoid binge drinking
- ♥ Do not lead a sedentary lifestyle

# Save the Lives of Those You Love!

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), including heart disease and stroke, cause early deaths. In fact, they cause 17.3 million deaths each year worldwide and the numbers are rising. By 2030, it is expected that 23 million people will die from CVDs annually.

It is a false idea that heart disease and stroke only affect older, male, rich populations. CVDs affect as many women as men. Women's risk is, however, seriously underestimated. Heart disease is in fact the number one killer of women, causing 1 in 3 female deaths world-wide. Cardiovascular disease is the top cause of mortality in Malta, accounting for 40% of all deaths. It is important that both men and women learn the truth about their CVD risk and take action to protect themselves and their family!

Heart disease and stroke are avoidable and are often triggered by risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, overweight and obesity, tobacco use, or the presence of diabetes. Making even just a few changes in your lifestyle can help to reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. This mainly consists of encouraging healthy eating, taking regular physical activity and avoiding tobacco use.

Children are vulnerable too. Modern society can expose children to risk factors such as: diets which are high in "bad" fats and sugar or contain too few calories, activities that discourage physical activity such as computer games and starting to smoke.

Adopting a healthy lifestyle can be somewhat of a challenge, but the tips given will help you and those you love! Take the opportunity to prevent heart disease and stroke by adopting heart-healthy living from childhood and throughout adulthood.

## Are you ready to take action?

The information in this leaflet is based on information in the World Heart Federation, World Heart Day 2012 leaflet. The World Heart Federation leads the global fight against heart disease and stroke with a focus on low- and middle-income countries via a united community of more than 200 member organizations from more than 100 countries ([www.world-heart-federation.org/](http://www.world-heart-federation.org/)).

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HEALTH**  
*We care*

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Take Care of  
Your Heart &  
that of Those  
you Love!