

KNOW YOUR HEART AGE

You're never too young to get a full picture of your cardio health – here are some expert tips on how to look after your ticker



While cardiovascular disease (CVD) is commonly associated with older generations, new data now shows that this is not the case. Over half of Brits aged 28 to 40 and almost a third of 25 to 30-year-olds have a heart age older than their actual age. Put simply, says Lead Clinical Director at PocDoc, Dr Kate Bunyan, “Their cardiovascular health is poorer than expected for their biological age – increasing their risk of heart attacks, strokes, and other serious related conditions.” Younger adults are now urged to take control and prioritise a heart health check earlier, challenging the misconception that cardiovascular disease (CVD) is only a concern later in life. These insights follow last year’s launch of PocDoc’s Healthy Heart Check – a digital at-home test providing a full cholesterol profile, BMI, NHS heart age, and 10-year CVD risk assessment.

Dr Kate adds, “Heart age is calculated using factors such as cholesterol levels, blood pressure, weight, and height, which can be worsened by habits like a poor diet, smoking, and excessive alcohol consumption. “In fact, research suggests an unhealthy diet is associated with a 64% increase in death from cardiometabolic causes in people aged 25-34. When someone’s heart age exceeds their biological age, it signals an urgent need for lifestyle changes or, in some cases, medical intervention.” Vital warning signs aren’t always apparent either, as it is easy to appear fit and healthy while silently suffering. Early detection, lifestyle changes, or treatment at a younger age could significantly reduce the long-term impact of cardiovascular disease. With many younger people remaining unaware of their risks until it’s too late, we explore ways of keeping your heart in tip-top shape.

1 GET TO BED

Cardiologist Dr Jack Wolfson says, “Whatever time you’re currently going to bed, make it an hour earlier.” He highlights sleep quality in regulating blood pressure, inflammation, and stress levels. Sleep also plays a vital role in hormone balance and bodily recovery.

2 SLASH SCREEN TIME

Dr Jack, aka the Natural Heart Doctor, suggests, “Just dial down on the tech, you’ll be much better off.” Reducing screen time can lead to improved sleep, decreased stress, and more opportunities for heart-healthy activities. Excessive screen time, particularly before bedtime, can interfere with your body’s natural sleep-wake cycle and contribute to mental fatigue.

3 GO NUTS FOR NUTS

Cholesterol charity Heart UK believes one in every four UK adults has metabolic syndrome – a group of conditions that could increase the risk of heart disease and high blood pressure. A recent experiment by them has proven that eating almonds daily can reduce LDL cholesterol which, when heightened, can cause heart attacks.

4 EAT A MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Dr Roy Jogiya, chief medical adviser at Heart Research UK, insists the Mediterranean diet is still the best way to go for true heart health. “This diet emphasises whole foods, healthy fats like olive oil and nuts, fruits and vegetables. It’s rich in monounsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids, which may help reduce LDL (bad) cholesterol and increase HDL (good) cholesterol. It contains antioxidants and polyphenols. The diet is high in fibre for blood sugar control and lowering blood pressure.”

5 ENJOY THE OUTDOORS

“Stand outside barefoot – it’s called grounding, and it’s great for your heart,” Dr Jack explains. Making direct contact with the earth is thought to enhance circulation and help reduce inflammation. In general, spending more time outdoors can significantly reduce the risk of a heart attack. The benefits of fresh air, natural light, and physical activity are immense for both heart health and general wellbeing.

‘IT COULD BE THE DECISION THAT SAVES YOUR LIFE’



Valentina Milanova, 31, from London, the founder and CEO of health business Daye, discovered her heart age was nearly a decade older than her real age

“I couldn’t believe it when I checked my heart health – I was in disbelief and confused. I run a healthcare business myself, I know how important it is to look after yourself, and I like to think I have a pretty healthy and active lifestyle. I exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet of whole foods, but being an entrepreneur comes with a lot of stress, which affects my overall wellbeing. “I didn’t want to wait for something to go wrong to start caring about my heart. So when I heard about PocDoc’s Healthy

Heart Check, it was a no-brainer. I did the test at home and in less than 10 minutes I was given potentially life-saving information about my health, which has changed the way I view and act about my heart health. “My results were a wake-up call and showed I have a heart age of 39, eight years older than my actual age. Not only did they make me think about my own health differently, they made me realise that broader perceptions of heart health need to change. It’s not something that can only affect you

in your fifties; it poses a real risk which many people my age don’t think about. My father had multiple stents installed and had heart disease most of his adult life. My grandparents also suffered from heart attacks and heart disease. Checking early is so valuable because it enables people like me with a family history of heart disease to check in conveniently. “Knowledge really is power, it could be the decision that saves your life later down the line. Just because you’re young, it doesn’t mean you’re invincible.”

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