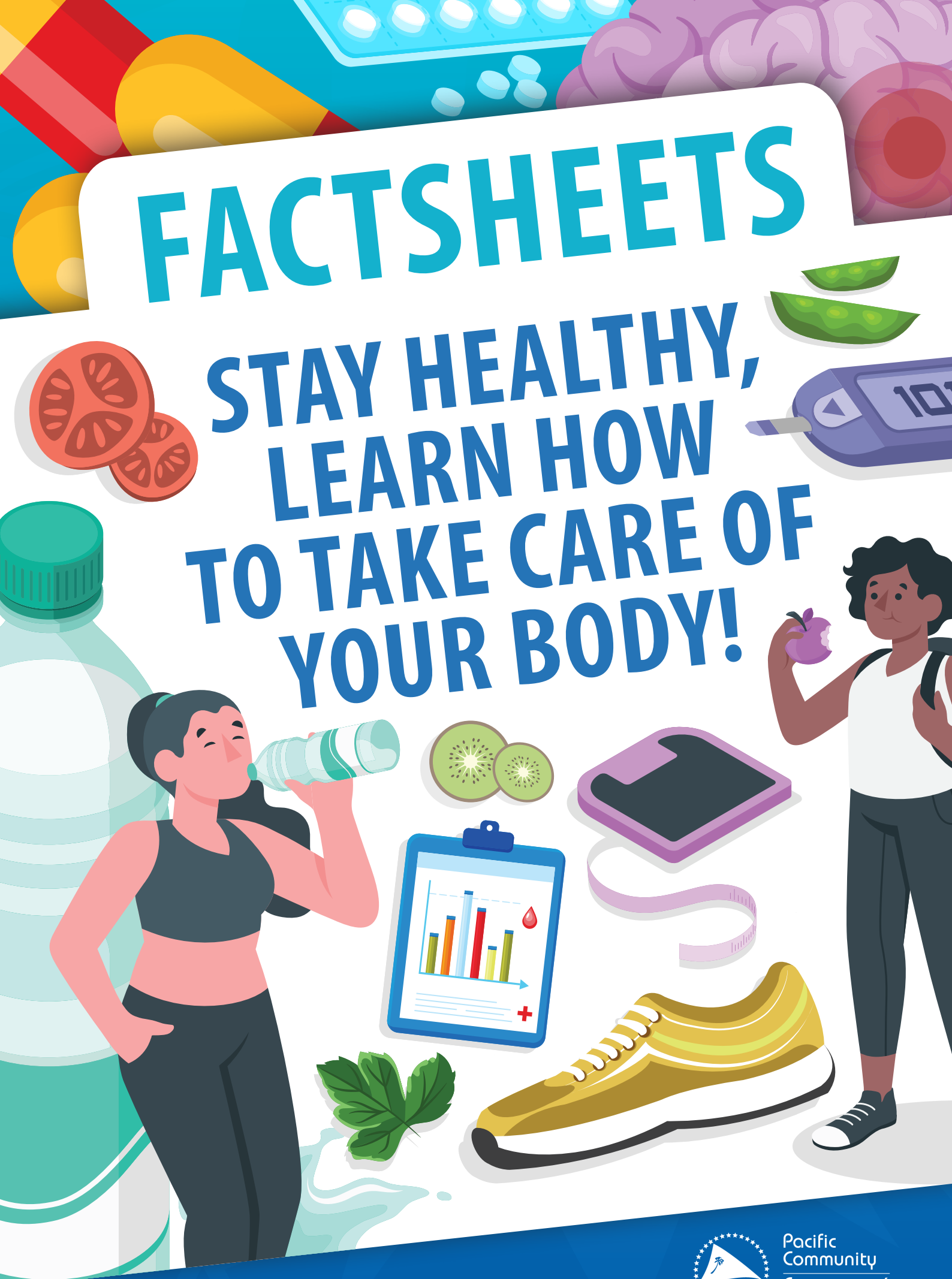


# FACTSHEETS

STAY HEALTHY,  
LEARN HOW  
TO TAKE CARE OF  
YOUR BODY!



Pacific  
Community  
Communauté  
du Pacifique



# FACTSHEET 1

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TYPE 2 DIABETES

### 1 What is type 2 diabetes?

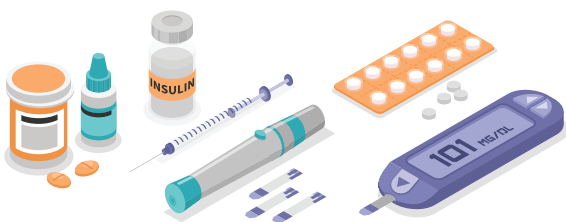
Diabetes is a condition that occurs when your blood sugar (glucose) is too high. Normally, your pancreas produces insulin, a hormone that helps regulate blood sugar levels. When cells do not respond to insulin properly or when not enough insulin is produced, too much sugar circulates in your blood, which can damage your body over time.



### 2 Who is most likely to develop type 2 diabetes?

You are at risk of developing diabetes if you:

- Have grandparents, parents, or siblings with diabetes
- Are 35 years or older
- Are overweight or carry weight around your waist (abdominal fat)
- Are not physically active
- Eat fatty foods, sweets or sugary drinks daily
- Had pre-diabetes or impaired glucose tolerance
- Had gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy) or gave birth to a baby who weighed more than 10 pounds

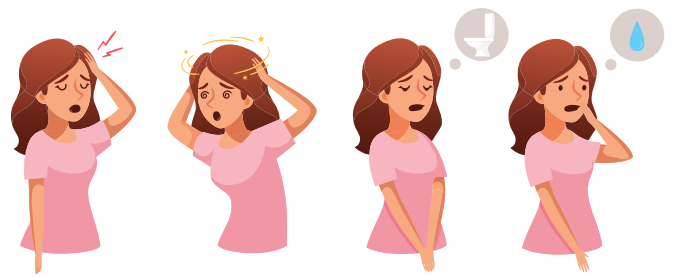


### 3 How do I know I have diabetes?

You may not be aware that you have diabetes, as you may feel fine. Not everyone who has diabetes will have symptoms, but these are the common ones:

- Feel thirsty frequently
- Feel tired and lack energy
- Urinate often
- Have blurry vision or poor eyesight
- Get infections which are hard to heal
- Feel hungry often
- Unexplained significant weight loss
- Have tingling sensation or numbness in hands and feet

If you have any of these symptoms, the best thing to do is to talk to your doctor or diabetes team and get a blood glucose test.



### 4 What is a normal blood sugar level?

The normal range for a blood sugar is 4–6 mmol/L. You have diabetes if your blood sugar is  $\geq 7.1$  mmol/L (fasting) or if it is  $\geq 11.1$  mmol/L (2 hours after a meal)

## 5 Why is it important to control my diabetes?

OVER TIME, UNCONTROLLED DIABETES WILL DAMAGE:

**EYES:** affecting vision and leading to blindness

**BRAIN:** affecting the brain leading to Stroke

**HEART:** affecting the heart leading to heart attack

**KIDNEYS:** affecting kidney function and leading to kidney failure

**NERVES:** affecting the feet and leading to foot problems and amputation as well as causing impotence

## 6 How is diabetes managed?

The main goal of diabetes management is to keep blood sugar level in the range of 4–6 mmol/L. This can be achieved with a combination of healthy eating and physical activity. However, some people with diabetes may require medication – either tablets or insulin injections.

## 7 Key points for good diabetes control:

- Eat healthy foods:
  - Eat three regular meals each day at a consistent time
  - Eat fresh vegetables and fruits every day
  - Eat carbohydrate food at each meal with even distribution and controlled amounts
  - Choose foods that are low in fat, sugar and salt
  - Drink plenty of clean and safe water every day
- Be physically active – aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days a week (e.g. swimming, cycling, brisk walking/jogging, dancing)
- Aim for a healthy body weight:
  - Weight loss improves sensitivity to insulin and better controls blood glucose
  - Healthy weight loss – aim to lose 0.5–1 kg a week
- Avoid using tobacco products
- Avoid or limit alcohol
- Take your medications as directed by your doctor and health team
- Attend your clinic appointments and routine tests to ensure better control



**Remember: diabetes can be prevented, it can be controlled and you can live well with diabetes!**

For further information, please contact your local health provider. For more resources on diabetes and healthy living, contact: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

# FACTSHEET 2

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE/HYPERTENSION

### 1 What is high blood pressure?

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a condition in which the force (pressure) of your blood against your artery walls is too high. High blood pressure is defined as blood pressure above 140/90.

Ongoing high pressure puts stress on your heart, can damage your arteries and increase your risk of heart attack, stroke and heart failure. It can also damage your kidneys and eyes.

### 2 What is a normal blood pressure level?

For most people an ideal blood pressure is 120/75, or lower.

Blood pressure is measured in millimetres of mercury (which is written as mmHg). Blood pressure readings are a combination of two measurements:

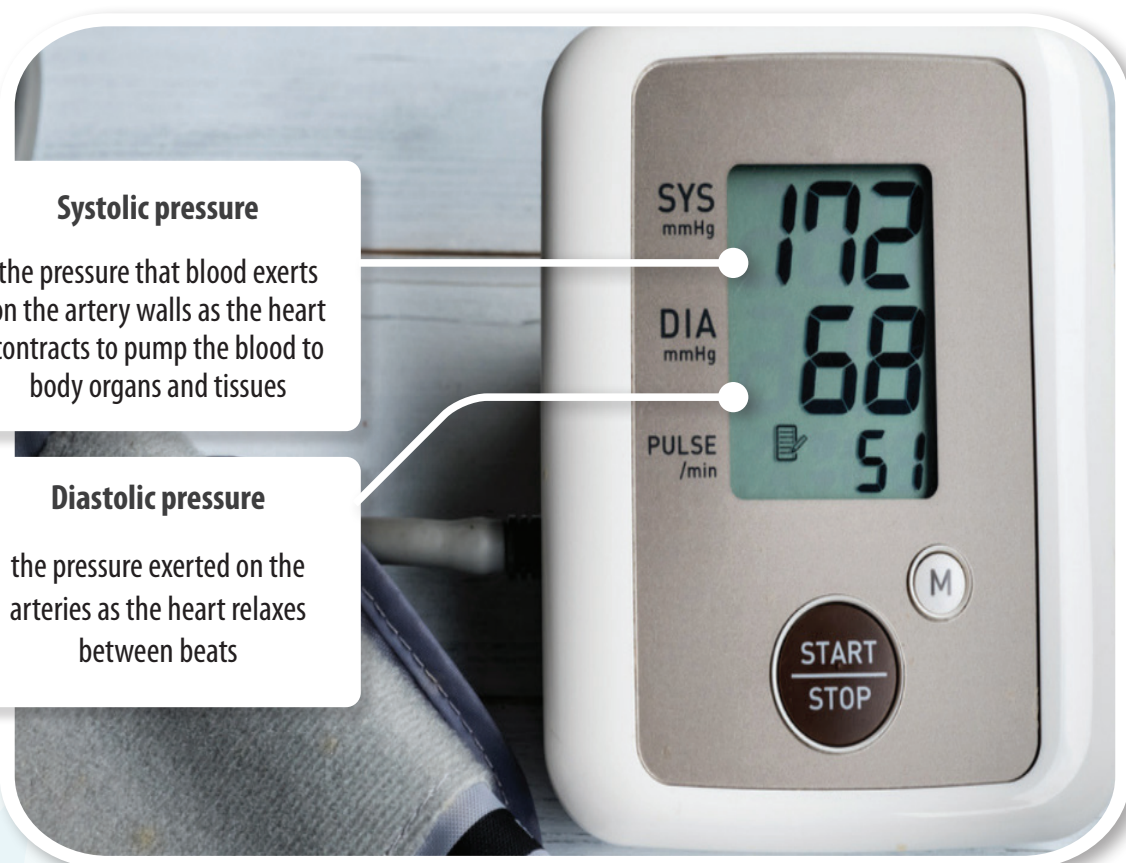
A single high blood pressure reading does not necessarily mean that you have high blood pressure. It's normal for your blood pressure to rise and fall during the day, depending on what you have been doing (e.g., exercise) and how you are feeling (e.g., stressed).

#### Systolic pressure

the pressure that blood exerts on the artery walls as the heart contracts to pump the blood to body organs and tissues

#### Diastolic pressure

the pressure exerted on the arteries as the heart relaxes between beats



### 3 Who is most likely to develop high blood pressure?

You are at risk of developing high blood pressure if you:

- Have family history – parents or siblings with hypertension /heart disease
- Are 35 years old or older – risk increases with age
- Are overweight or obese
- Have poor diabetes control
- Have high levels of cholesterol in your blood
- Have an unhealthy diet – regularly consume fatty foods, foods high in salt or sugary foods and drinks
- Are not physically active
- Are under stress
- Do not have enough sleep or rest
- Smoking
- Drinking
- Drink too much over time

### 4 How do I know I have high blood pressure?

You may not be aware that you have high blood pressure. Not everyone who has high blood pressure will have symptoms, but these are the common ones:

- Headaches – when blood pressure is too high, it can damage the blood vessels of your brain, leading to increased intracranial pressure
- Dizziness – severe high blood pressure is a major cause of stroke. Sudden dizziness, loss of balance or unsteady walking can all be a sign of stroke
- Nausea – caused by extremely high blood pressure, it usually happens together with dizziness
- Fatigue
- Irregular heart rhythms
- Blurred vision – there are many small vessels on your eyeballs. When your blood pressure rises to a dangerous level, these vessels can be damaged to bleed, which causes blurred vision or even vision loss
- Nosebleeds – Extremely high blood pressure can cause nosebleeds due to damaged vessels inside your nose. With this symptom, you need to call an ambulance or go to the hospital immediately

If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your doctor or health team to check your blood pressure.

### Key points to control your blood pressure:

- Adopt a healthy lifestyle:
  - Don't smoke
  - Avoid or limit alcohol
  - Get enough rest
- Aim for a healthy body weight – weight loss reduces blood pressure
- Eat healthy foods:
  - Eat three regular meals each day, including breakfast
  - Eat fresh vegetables and fruits every day
  - Chose foods that are low in fat, salt and sugar
  - Use herbs and spices to flavour food and avoid salt
  - Drink plenty of clean and safe water every day
- Be physically active – aim for at least 30 mins of moderate physical activity at least five days a week
- Take your medications as directed by your doctor and health team
- Attend your clinic appointments and routine tests to check functions of your heart and kidney to ensure better control

### 5 Why is it important to control your blood pressure?

Over time, if untreated, high blood pressure can cause damage to your heart (by stiffening arteries which will reduce the flow of blood and oxygen to the heart) and other Organs. This will lead to:

- Angina – development of chest pain
- Heart attack – blood supply to the heart is blocked
- Heart failure – heart cannot pump enough blood and oxygen to the body
- Stroke – blood supply and oxygen to the brain is blocked
- Irregular heartbeat
- Kidney failure

**Remember: High blood pressure can be prevented and can be controlled**

For further information, contact your local health provider.  
For more resources on high blood pressure and healthy living,  
Contact: NCD Team: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

# FACTSHEET 3

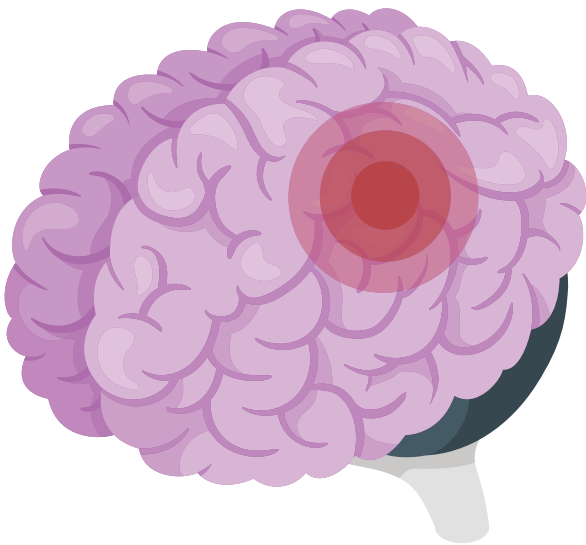
## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STROKE

### 1 What is stroke?

A stroke occurs when blood stops flowing to parts of your brain, usually because of a blood clot.

A less common cause of stroke is when a blood vessel bursts and bleeds into the brain.

Stroke can be fatal or cause long-term disability. Depending on the part of the brain that is damaged, it can affect your ability to think, walk, talk, eat, see, read or function as normal. Some people make a full recovery after a stroke while others may have ongoing disabilities.



### 2 Who is most likely to get a stroke?

You are at risk of having a stroke if you:

- Have high blood pressure or hypertension
- Are 35 years or older
- Are overweight or obese
- Are not physically active
- Smoke cigarettes or use any tobacco products
- Have poor diabetes control

### 3 What are the symptoms of stroke?

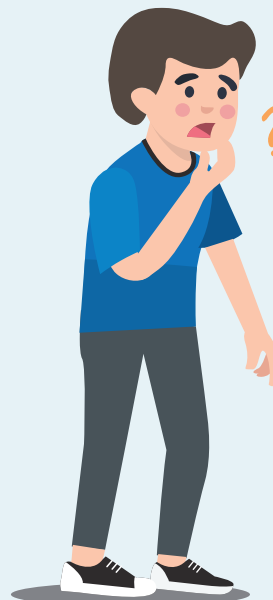
If you have any of the following symptoms, you need to call an ambulance or go to the hospital immediately.



**FACE DROOPING  
ON ONE SIDE**



**ARM WEAKNESS  
ON ONE SIDE**



**SPEECH MIXED UP,  
SLURRED OR LOST**

**TAKE ACTION  
CALL AN AMBULANCE  
IMMEDIATELY**

## Choices you can make to lower risk of heart attack and stroke



**STOP SMOKING**



**MAKE HEART  
HEALTHY EATING AND  
DRINKING CHOICES**



**MOVE MORE**



**HEALTHY NORMAL  
WEIGHT**



**TAKE  
MEDICATIONS**

**4**

## How to lower your risk and to manage stroke:

- Check your blood pressure regularly, and follow any treatment advised by your doctor
- Take your medications as directed by your doctor and health team
- Attend your clinic appointments to ensure better control and routine tests to check functions of your heart and kidney
- Get checked for atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat) and follow treatment by your doctor
- Healthy Lifestyles
  - Stop smoking
  - Avoid or limit alcohol
  - Have enough rest
- Aim for a healthy body weight
  - Weight loss reduces blood pressure, improve health and wellbeing
- Eat healthy foods
  - Reduce your salt intake
  - Use herbs and spices to flavour food and avoid salt
  - Eat three regular meals including breakfast
  - Eat fresh vegetables and fruits every day
  - Eat foods that are low in fat, salt and sugar
  - Drink plenty of clean and safe water every day
- Be physically active – aim for at least 30 mins of moderate physical activity in 5 or more days per week
- Reduce high cholesterol levels
- Lose weight – being overweight puts extra strain on your blood vessels and heart

**Remember: A stroke can be prevented!**

For further information, please contact your local health provider.  
For more resources on Stroke and healthy living, contact: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)



# FACTSHEET 4

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEART DISEASE (CORONARY HEART DISEASE)

### 1 What is coronary heart disease?

Coronary heart disease is a condition where the heart and blood vessels to the heart do not get enough blood. This is due to fatty build up of fat, called plaque in the inner lining of your arteries, referred to as atherosclerosis. The plaque can also rupture, leading to a blood clot which can block an artery and can cause a heart or angina attack.

### 2 Who is most likely to develop heart disease?

Your risk of developing heart diseases increases if you:

- Have a family history of heart disease
- Are 30 years or older
- Have high cholesterol
- Have high blood pressure
- Have high blood glucose/diabetes
- Are obese with an increased waist circumference
- Smoke cigarettes or tobacco

The more risk factors you have, the higher your risk becomes. Reducing the number of risk factors will lower your risk of developing coronary heart disease.

### 3 How can I prevent heart diseases?

The three major modifiable risk factors that you can control are:

- Lower your blood pressure
- Improve your cholesterol level
- Do not smoke

Other ways to prevent and control heart disease are to:

- Be physically active
- Eat less fatty foods, especially animal fats (e.g. meat and dairy products)
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Avoid or limit alcohol
- Minimise or avoid stress
- Eat less salt and salty foods, including processed foods high in sodium
- Reduce your weight

### 4 How do I know I have heart disease?

Many people are not aware that they have heart disease or notice any symptoms until they have a heart or angina attack. The most common symptom is chest pain. A heart attack can be triggered by an activity, stress or a large meal as it creates extra work for the heart. In most cases, angina attacks can be managed with medication.



## 5 What are the warning signs of a heart attack?

Pain, discomfort, pressure, tightness or heaviness in any of these areas:

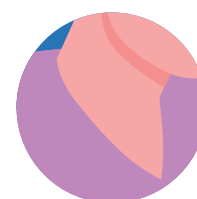
You may also feel:

- Dizzy
- Sweaty
- Short of breath
- Tired
- Nauseous

If you have any of these symptoms for more than 10 minutes, you may be having a heart attack – this is an emergency, you need to call the hospital.



**JAW** .....



..... **NECK**



**CHEST** .....

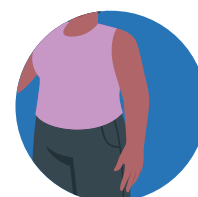
Usually the left chest

..... **SHOULDERS**

Often felt in the back left-hand shoulder



..... **ARMS**



**Remember: A severe heart attack can lead to heart failure and death but in most cases, it can be prevented!**

For further information, please contact your local health provider.  
For more resources on heart attacks and healthy living,  
contact: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

# FACTSHEET 5

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CANCER

### 1 What is cancer?

Cancer is a disease of the cells of the body. Our bodies are always making new cells to replace the worn-out ones or to heal damaged cells. Cancer starts when certain cells in your body grow and divide in an uncontrolled way. These cells may grow into a lump, called a tumour. Tumours can be benign (not cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). Cancer cells can invade and destroy surrounding tissues.

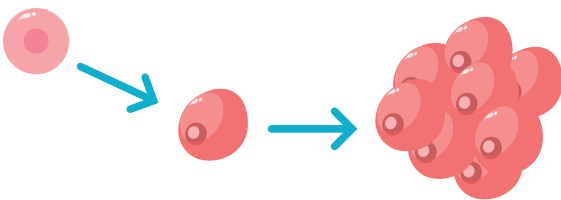
As the tumour grows, the cancerous cells can invade and destroy surrounding tissues. They can spread (metastasise) to other parts of the body. There are more than 200 different types of cancer. The most common types of cancer in the Pacific include:

- Breast cancer
- Lung cancer
- Cervical cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Prostate cancer
- Bowel cancer
- Liver cancer
- Stomach cancer
- Skin cancer

### 2 Who is most likely to get cancer?

There are different factors (including lifestyle) that can cause the development of different cancers. You are at risk of developing cancer if you:

- Are age 45 years or older
- Have a family history of cancer
- Smoke – currently or previously
- Drink alcohol – heavily or regularly. The more you drink, the higher your risk
- Are exposed to cancer-causing substances – chemicals in tobacco smoke (even for non-smokers) or radiation, such as ultraviolet rays from the sun
- Unhealthy diet



### 3 How can I lower my risk of cancer?

Following a healthy lifestyle will help reduce your risk of at least 12 different types of cancer.

- Aim for a healthy body weight
- Be physically active – aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, at least five days a week
- Eat healthy foods:

● Eat healthy fresh foods. Avoid foods such as mouldy and burnt food etc.

- Have cancer checks regularly, e.g. cervical screening and self-examination (for breast cancer)
- Avoid exposure to radiation, including ultraviolet rays from the sun – if you have fair skin, you should wear sunscreen and avoid spending too much time in direct sunlight



## 4 What are the symptoms for cancer?

Common signs and symptoms for some of the most common cancers in the Pacific include:

### Symptoms

Bowel cancer

Breast cancer

Lung cancer

Prostate cancer

### Types of cancer

- blood in your bowel motions (this may look like red blood or black bowel motions)
- a change of bowel habits
- general abdominal discomfort or pain (frequent gas pains, bloating or cramps)
- unexplained weight loss
- tiredness

- a lump or lumpiness, or thickening or pain in the breast or armpit
- nipple changes (skin dimpling or a rash/red marks that appear only on your breast)
- a blood-stained discharge from the nipple
- an inverted nipple (unless this has always been the case)

- Coughing up of blood (Haemoptysis)
- Cough (new or changed; may be dry or with phlegm)
- Shortness of breath
- Chest or shoulder pain
- Hoarse voice – due to laryngeal nerve compression
- Fatigue
- Weight loss > 10%
- Unresolved chest infection
- Build-up of fluid in the lungs (pleural effusion)

- poor flow of urine
- trouble stopping the flow of urine (dribbling after you have finished peeing)
- need to pee more often, at night or urgently
- trouble starting to pee
- incontinence (not being able to control when you pee)
- pain when peeing
- blood in your urine

**Remember: Some forms of cancer can be prevented by following a healthy lifestyle. For others, detect early and treat quickly!**

For further information, please contact your local health provider.  
For more resources on cancer and healthy living, contact: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

If you have any symptoms, visit your doctor or healthcare provider as soon as possible for further investigation and early management, if required.

# FACTSHEET 6

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OBESITY

### 1 What is obesity?

Obesity is abnormal or excessive body fat stored in the body. It is a major risk factor for all non-communicable diseases like heart diseases, type 2 diabetes, some musculoskeletal conditions and some form of cancers.

- More accurate measures of body fat and body fat distribution include:

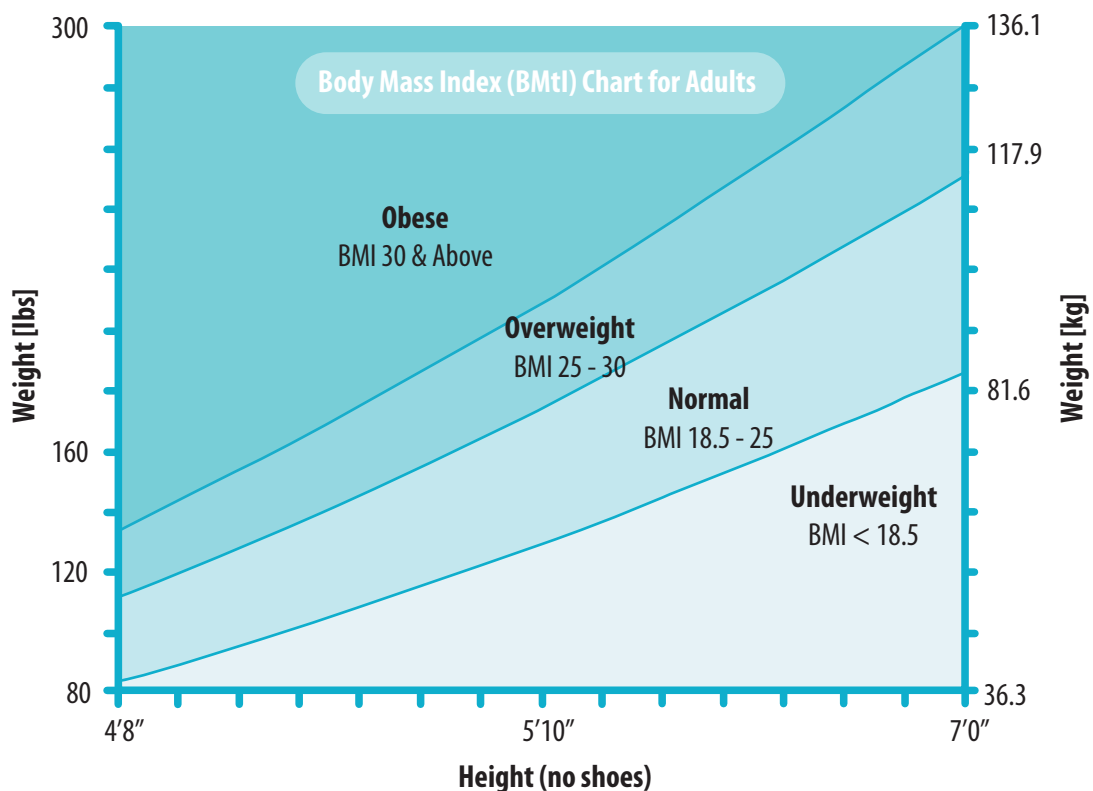
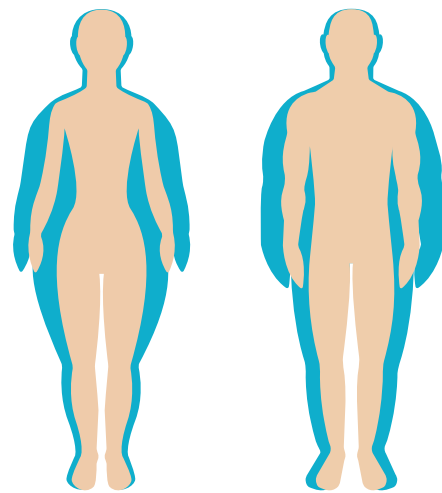
- Waist to hip ratio – an indicator of abdominal obesity
- Skinfold thickness – an indicator of fat stores

### 2 How do we measure obesity?

- Body mass index (BMI) is the most common and easy calculation of body size, based on the person's weight and height. You are:

- Underweight if your BMI is less than 18.5
- Of normal weight if your BMI is 18.5–24.9
- Overweight if your BMI is 25–29.9
- Obese if your BMI is 30 or more, and
  - a waist circumference greater than 102 cm for men and 88 cm for women

- Formula:  $BMI = \text{kg/m}^2$  (weight/height)
- BMI chart (for adults) to calculate your BMI: plot your weight and height in the chart below and trace to their meeting point



### 3 What causes obesity?

Several factors contribute to weight gain and obesity:

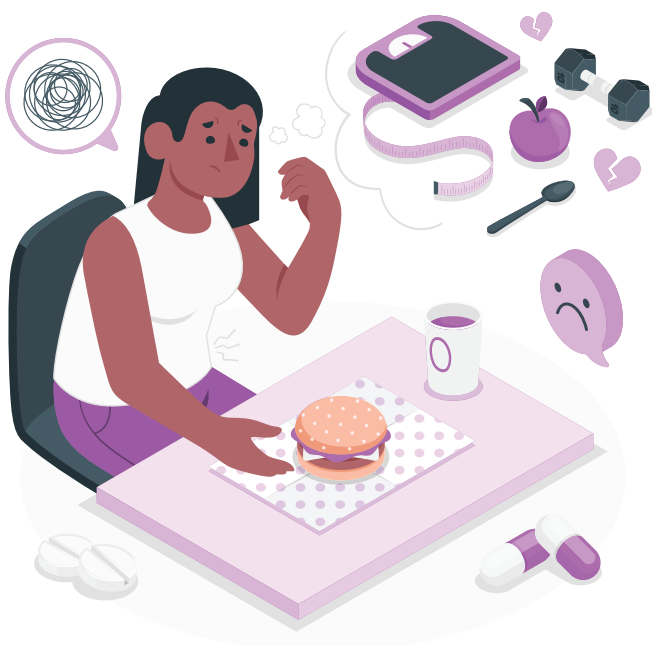
- Energy imbalance – energy input (food intake) is greater than the energy output (physical activity). If this imbalance continues for a long period of time, it will lead to weight gain
- Unhealthy diet/food choices:

- Consuming foods and drinks that have a high sugar and fat content, especially saturated fat
- Eating large amounts of food at mealtimes
- Irregular meal patterns that involve missing meals or eating too much when convenient
- Not eating enough vegetables and fruits for a good supply of dietary fibre

- Physical inactivity – physical inactivity prevents energy expenditure and so leads to energy imbalance and retaining excess weight
- Health conditions and medications: some medications may cause weight gain and obesity, such as corticosteroids and antidepressants

- Some health conditions may cause weight gain and obesity, such as polycystic ovarian syndrome and underactive thyroid
- Eating disorders – stress and emotional factors can cause people to overeat or starve themselves

- Genetics can increase susceptibility to weight gain. However, the likelihood of developing obesity can be reduced by controlling food intake and physical activity



### 4 How can I prevent and manage obesity?

- Eat healthy foods:

- Eat three regular meals a day, at a consistent time, avoid missing meals
- Avoid starvation, instead eat according to hunger
- Reduce food portions at each meal, especially energy foods
- Avoid snacking in between meals – if you must, snack on raw vegetables
- Eat a variety of nutritious foods from the 3 food groups
- Eat more fresh vegetables and fruits, every day
- Eat foods that are low in fat, salt and sugar
- Use herbs and spices to flavour food and avoid salt
- Use food labels, nutrition information on package to guide food choices - select low fat (<10 g), sugar (<10 g) and fibre (>5 g) per 100 g
- Drink plenty of clean and safe water every day – drink a glass of water with each meal

- Be physically active:

- Aim for at least 30 mins of moderate physical activity at least 5 days a week
- For extra physical benefit, consider doing strength and resistance exercises (push-ups, pull ups, climbing a hill or doing weights) 2–3 days a week
- Look for additional ways of adding physical activity to your life (walk to the shop instead of driving the car or taking the steps instead of using the elevator, etc.)

- Live in a healthy manner:

- Don't smoke
- Avoid or limit alcohol
- Get enough rest

If you have a medical condition, consult your doctor for dietary control and physical activity advice to avoid further complications.

**Remember: Obesity prevention and control reduces your risk of health problems!**

For further information, please contact your local health provider. For more resources on obesity and healthy living, contact: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

# FACTSHEET 7

## HEALTHY EATING 5 KEYS TO A HEALTHY DIET

To be healthy and stay healthy, it is important to know what and how much to eat and drink each day.

### 1 Eat a variety of nutritious foods

Eat a variety of energy, body building and protective foods.



#### WHY?

By eating a variety of foods every day from the three food groups, you are more likely to fulfil your body's needs. A variety of foods provides different types and amounts of nutrients; no single food or food group provides all the nutrients the body needs. Whole (unprocessed) and fresh foods every day ensures that the diet contains all the essential nutrients for good health.

### 2 Eat vegetables and fruits

Include vegetables and fruits in all your meals to ensure you get 3 or more servings of fresh local vegetables and 2 servings of fresh local fruits every day.

#### WHY?

Vegetables (non-starchy) and fruits provide vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre as well as many other phytonutrients (beneficial chemicals found in plants) as well as folate from green leafy vegetables, pro-vitamin A (carotenoids) from yellow, orange, red and green vegetables and potassium is found in a wide range of vegetables and fruit.

Eating vegetables and fruit can help prevent excess weight gain and obesity as most vegetables and fruit are low in energy (calories) and generally high in dietary fibre, which also lowers the risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some cancers. Starchy vegetables (sweet potatoes, potatoes, taro, etc.) provide carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals and are filling. However, they do tend to be denser in energy (calories), so it is healthier to have more non-starchy vegetables on your plate.

### 3 Eat less fat, salt and sugar

#### FAT

- Use unsaturated vegetable oils (olive, soy, sunflower or corn oil) rather than animal fats or oils high in saturated fats (butter, ghee, lard, coconut and palm oils)
- Choose white meat (e.g. poultry) and fish, which are generally low in fat, over red meat
- Avoid processed meats as these are high in fat and salt
- Choose low-fat or reduced-fat milk and dairy products, if available
- Avoid processed, baked and fried foods that contain industrially produced trans fats (e.g. partially hydrogenated oils). Trans fats do occur naturally in certain meat and milk products, but the industrially produced fats found in various processed foods are harmful to your health

#### WHY?

Fats and oils are high sources of energy and eating too much fat will lead to weight gain and obesity. Unhealthy fats such as saturated and trans-fats increase the risk of NCDs, such as heart disease and stroke.

#### SALT

When cooking and preparing foods, limit the amount of salt and high-sodium condiments (e.g. soy sauce).

- Avoid foods and snacks that are high in salt
- Use herbs and spices for flavouring instead of salt

#### WHY?

Diets high in sodium (including salt) increase the risk of high blood pressure, which can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

## SUGAR

Avoid foods and drinks that contain a lot of sugar. As a rule, any product that contains more than 10 g of added sugar is considered an unhealthy option.

- Avoid foods and snacks that are high in sugar
- Avoid or limit your intake of drinks that are high in sugars (e.g. fruit juices, cordials, syrups, flavoured milks, yogurt drinks)
- Choose fresh fruits instead of sweet snacks such as cookies, cakes and chocolate

### WHY?

Diets that are high in sugar increase the risk of tooth decay, weight gain, obesity and NCDs like diabetes, heart disease and stroke.



## 4 Drink plenty of clean and safe water

To hydrate, plain water is your best option – it contains no energy (calories)

- Aim to drink 6–8 cups of clean and safe water every day
- Fruits and vegetables also contain significant amounts of water

### WHY?

Water is essential to life, it:

- Keeps the body cool in hot climates/temperatures
- Helps the body remove waste and prevents constipation
- Carries oxygen and nutrients to body cells
- Helps with weight control

## Remember: Healthy eating keeps you healthy!

For further information, please contact your local health provider.  
For more resources on healthy eating and healthy living, contact:  
[ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

## 5 Reduce alcohol consumption

Low intake of alcohol is not harmful but drinking too much at one time (binge drinking) or over time can lead to long-term health problems. Stop drinking alcohol if you could be pregnant, are pregnant or are trying to get pregnant. When breastfeeding, it is best to be alcohol-free. There is no safe level of alcohol use at any stage of pregnancy.

### WHY?

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of:

- Accidents and violence
- Becoming overweight and obese
- Cancers of the mouth, throat, larynx, oesophagus, large bowel, rectum, breast and liver – alcohol is a known carcinogen
- Developing NCDs, including heart, stroke and liver disease
- Brain and nervous system damage
- Harm to fetus development





# FACTSHEET 8

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SMOKING

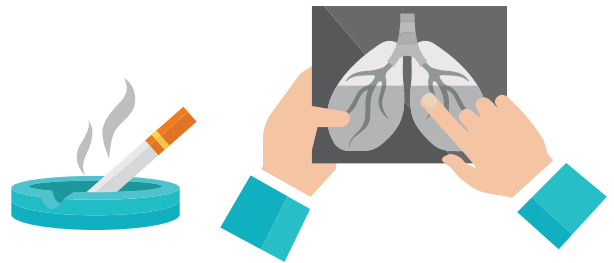
### 1 What are the facts about smoking?

- There is evidence of a strong connection between tobacco use and the development of cardiovascular and other serious diseases such as cancers of the mouth, lungs and throat
- Every cigarette you smoke is harmful to many organs and systems in your body. More than 60 of the chemicals in cigarette smoke can cause cancer
- Immediate benefits of stopping smoking within:

- 20 minutes – your blood pressure starts to lower; body temperature and pulse rate drops to normal
- 24 hours – your lungs begin to work better
- 48 hours – your ability to taste and smell improves, making food taste better
- 12 weeks – your heart works more efficiently, pumping blood more easily
- 1 year – your risk of heart attack reduces to half that of someone who smokes
- 5–15 years – your risk of heart attack drops to that of someone who never smoked and your risk of developing lung, mouth and throat cancer is half that of a smoker

### 2 How does smoking affect your body?

- **Your lungs:** Cigarette smoke coats your lungs with tar and damages the tiny hairs (cilia) that help clean your lungs. Without these hairs, toxins from cigarette smoke remain in the lungs, and can move to other organs via the bloodstream.
- **Your skin:** Smokers tend to get wrinkles sooner than non-smokers. This may be because smoking reduces blood flow and may damage tissue (elastin and collagen).
- **Your blood:** Many of the chemicals and toxins in tobacco smoke end up in your bloodstream and can travel throughout your body and cause damage to body organs. For example, carbon monoxide removes oxygen from your muscles and brain and for every cigarette you smoke, it temporarily increases your heart rate and blood pressure and reduces blood flow leading to high blood pressure and heart disease.
- **Your mouth:** Smoking causes gum disease, oral cancer, loss of taste, stained teeth, mouth sores and bad breath.
- **Your ability to have children:** Smoking can reduce fertility, making it difficult to conceive.



### 3 Who is most likely to be affected by smoking?

#### The Smoker

Smoking cigarettes and tobacco products is hazardous to health as it can cause oral cancer and problems of the mouth, lung cancer and problems of the respiratory system, problems to the skin, affect blood flow and cause high blood pressure and heart disease and affect fertility.

#### The second-hand smokers

Refers to those who do not smoke but inhale the smoke from smokers around them. Those at highest risk are children of smokers, unborn babies of smoking pregnant women or those who are constantly exposed to smokers.

- Effects on children:

- Kids who have a parent who smokes are 7 times more likely to become smokers when they grow older
- Smoking around children increases their risk of serious infections that affect breathing, such as croup, bronchitis and pneumonia
- They're also more likely to catch coughs, colds or wheezes
- Smoking increases the risk of your children contracting glue ear and other middle ear infections
- Smoking increases the risk of your children getting meningococcal disease

- The unborn child – smoking during pregnancy:

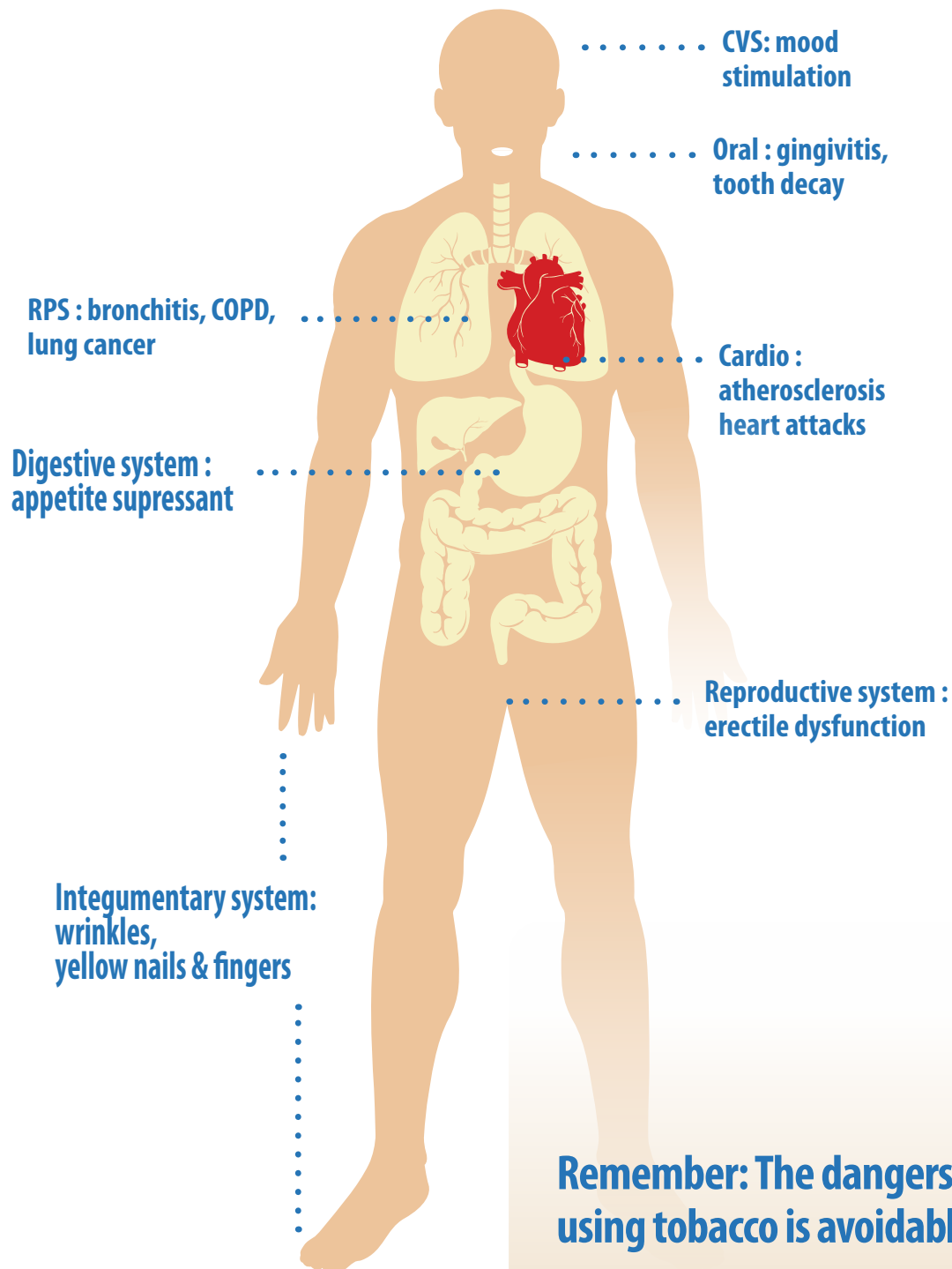
- Puts the unborn baby at risk for certain defects
- Can cause tissue damage in the unborn baby, particularly in the lung and brain, and some studies suggest a link between maternal smoking and cleft lip
- Can cause low birth weight that could be harmful

## 4 Why should I quit smoking?

- Smoking starves your skin of oxygen making it dry and grey. You develop wrinkles around your eyes and mouth much earlier, and the tar stains your teeth and fingers.
- Smokers who do not quit have a 1 in 2 chance of dying of a smoking-related illness – most commonly lung cancer, emphysema, heart diseases and stroke.
- Smoking is a major cause of blindness.
- Quitting can also improve mood, and help relieve stress, anxiety and depression.
- Your sense of smell and taste will get better.

## 5 How to quit smoking

- Use a quit smoking aid/medicine (Note: Vaping is NOT a quit smoking aid)
- Seek counselling support
- Make a quitting plan and stick to it
- Use experience from the past – if you have tried before, apply what worked and what did not
- Know and avoid your triggers – time, place, environment and people
- Know and be prepared for your withdrawal symptoms – feeling sick or nervous



**Remember: The dangers of using tobacco is avoidable**

For further information, contact your local health provider.  
For more resources on smoking and healthy living, contact: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

# FACTSHEET 9

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL

### 1 What is alcohol?

Alcohol (ethanol or ethyl alcohol) is an addictive toxin and intoxicant, found in beer, wine and spirits.

- An addictive substance means that you find it hard to stop taking it once you have started.
- Toxin means it is poisonous to the human body in large amounts.
- Intoxicant means it causes intoxication or an alters state of mind

### 2 How does alcohol affect your body?

Drinking too much alcohol at one time (binge drinking) can lead to drowsiness, respiratory depression (your breathing becomes slow, shallow or stops entirely), coma or even death.

Drinking too much over time (alcohol misuse) can lead to long-term health problems with increased risk of:

- Cancer – alcohol is a carcinogen (a substance that can cause cancer). It can cause common cancers (breast, colon, rectum) and other forms of cancers (mouth, oesophagus, larynx and stomach)
- Obesity and weight gain – alcohol is high in energy and contributes to weight gain (calories = 7 cal/1 g alcohol)
- Liver cirrhosis – leads to liver failure or cancer
- Diabetes – alcohol can destroy the cells in the body that produce insulin
- Stroke – heavy drinking may increase the risk of stroke
- Malnourishment – excess intake of alcohol reduces appetite and can affect the absorption of certain nutrients.

Alcohol can act as a stimulant that induces feelings of euphoria and talkativeness. However, it is classed as a central nervous system depressant, which means that high doses depress your central nervous system and slows down your body's reaction times and responses.



### 3 What are symptoms of too much alcohol?

Symptoms are felt at different stages of intoxication and drunkenness – relaxation, laughter, slurred speech, inability to walk straight and impaired judgement and coordination.

Alcohol has varying effects on people. Your reaction to alcohol can be influenced by:

- the ability of your liver to break down alcohol
- your stomach's contents or recent food consumption
- how much alcohol you have had and how quickly you drank it
- your body size, age, gender and ethnicity



### 4 How much alcohol is safe?

There is no safe level of alcohol, but your risk is low if intake is limited to:

- up to 2 standard drinks per day for men, and
- up to 1 standard drink per day for women

## 5 What is a standard drink?

A standard drink is a unit of measure to define the amount of pure alcohol or strength of the alcohol drink. Standard drinks are a useful and simple way to monitor how much alcohol you are drinking.

1 standard drink = 10 g of pure alcohol, regardless of container size or type of alcohol

## 6 Who should not drink alcohol?

There are times and circumstances when you should not drink, if you:

- are under 18 years of age
- are pregnant or planning to get pregnant
- are breastfeeding
- are on medication that interacts with alcohol
- have a condition made worse by drinking alcohol
- feel unwell, depressed, tired or cold, as alcohol could make things worse
- are about to operate machinery or a vehicle or do anything that is risky or requires skill

### EXAMPLES OF A STANDARD DRINK



100ml wine  
(1 small glass)



100ml wine  
(1 small glass)

=



375ml light beer  
(1 average can)



285ml full-strength beer  
(1 average can)

**Remember: The harm caused by alcohol misuse is preventable!**

For further information, please contact your local health provider.  
For more resources on alcohol and healthy living, contact: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

# FACTSHEET 10

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEALTHY WEIGHT LOSS

### 1 What is healthy weight loss?

Healthy weight loss is achieved through healthy eating and physical activity. The key to successful weight loss is gradual and sustained lifestyle changes that can be adopted and maintained as part of daily living. Having a healthy body weight is about maintaining the balance between the energy input (food and drinks) and energy output (physical activity). Weight gain occurs when your energy input is greater than your energy output.



### 2 How do I lose weight?

Healthy weight loss is achieved through healthy eating and physical activity.

### 3 Healthy eating

Replace some of your energy foods (root crops, meat, fats and oils) with foods from the protective food groups (particularly vegetables).

#### WHY?

● Vegetables and fruits are:

- low in energy and fat
- high in dietary fibre that maintains a feeling of fullness, satisfying hunger and helps prevent constipation

### 4 Why is it important to lose weight?

- Losing 5–10% of your current weight has significant health improvements
- It reduces the risk of developing non-communicable diseases, is a key component of managing diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and some forms of cancer
- It promotes healthy bones and joints (aids with arthritis)
- Improves wellness and mental wellbeing



## ● Control the amount of energy foods you consume

Your energy requirements is determined by age, gender, body size and level of physical activity. Consumption of too much food from the energy food group will contribute to weight gain.

Energy foods come from carbohydrates, proteins and fats (macronutrients) and alcohol.

The recommendation is to eat foods with less energy content such as foods low in fat, moderate amounts of foods containing protein and carbohydrates and avoid alcohol.

### WHY?

- Excess of energy intake can be stored as fat and contribute to weight gain
- Processed foods are high in energy but less nutritious (low vitamins and minerals)

## ● Eat three regular main meals

- Have breakfast, lunch and dinner 4 hours between each main meal and avoid missing meals
- Avoid overeating
- The body needs a regular supply of energy to maintain health and growth
- Avoid starvation and instead eat according to hunger



## 5 Physical activity

- Conduct consistent moderate physical activities 30 minutes at least 5 days a week
- Be as physically active, as many ways as you can
- Consider movement as an opportunity

### WHY?

- Improves health and wellbeing – feeling good about yourself
- Increases your expenditure of energy
- Increases the production of endorphins or 'feel-good neurotransmitters'
- Reduces stress

## ● Types of physical activities (exercise)

- Aerobic (fat burning) – any types of cardio exercise e.g. swimming, walking, jogging, cycling
- Anaerobic (carbohydrate) – tennis, jumping, sprinting, lifting heavy weights



## Some weight loss programmes are not recommended:

Many diets promise rapid weight loss and can be appealing as a quick fix. However, they deprive you of essential nutrients, are not sustainable and can compromise long-term health.

For further information, please contact your local health provider. For more resources on weight loss, contact: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

## HEALTHY EATING FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Eating well during pregnancy is important for you and your baby. Nutritional needs are higher when you are pregnant and meeting these requirements can help you prevent and cope with typical symptoms during pregnancy (e.g. nausea, constipation and food cravings) as well as reduce the risk of complications (e.g. gestational diabetes, maternal hypertension and traumatic births).

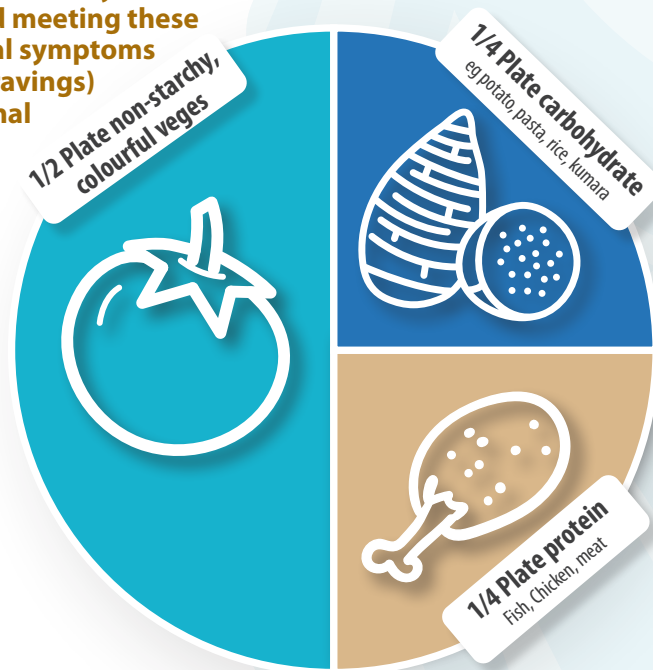
### What should I eat and drink every day?

#### 1 Eat a variety of nutritious foods

Eat a variety, and appropriate amounts, of local and fresh foods, from the three food groups: non-starchy colourful vegetables and fruits, proteins and carbohydrates.

##### WHY?

Eating a variety of foods every day from the three food groups to provide all the essential for you and the baby.



#### 2 Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits for protection and enhanced immunity

- Choose fresh and local vegetables and fruits
- Eat a variety of vegetables and fruits every day
- Eat at least 5 servings of vegetables and fruits each day – 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruits (refer to pictures for serving sizes)

##### WHY?

- Protective foods provide vitamins and minerals to build and strengthen immunity of both the mother and baby
- Vegetables and fruit provide dietary fibre that is important for digestion and gut health and phytonutrients that prevent damage (oxidative) to cells and reduce the risk of cancer
- Colourful vegetables and fruits are rich sources of micronutrients such as folate, found in green, leafy vegetables and pro-vitamin A found in yellow, orange and red vegetables and fruits

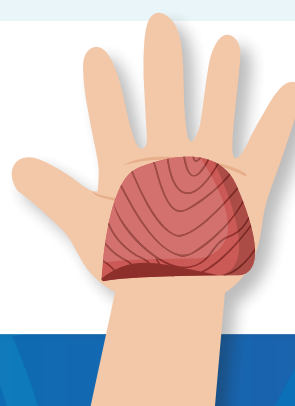
#### 3 Eat foods for body building and growth – fish, lean red meat, chicken and legumes

- Body building foods include lean meat (red and white), fish, dairy products, nuts and legumes
- Choose fresh and local body building foods to eat at each meal
  - Aim for 3 servings each day (refer to pictures for serving sizes)
  - Body building foods are rich in protein, calcium, iron, zinc and other nutrients such as healthy fats in fish

##### WHY?

Rich sources of protein and essential amino acids and fatty acids are:

- good for growth and overall wellness of baby and mother
- provide essential minerals such as iron, good for the baby's development and for the mother to avoid anaemia during pregnancy. Include foods rich in vitamin C with your meals to improve the absorption of iron





## 4 Eat energy foods

- Energy foods include carbohydrates (root crops, rice, bread and cereals), fats and protein (meat, dairy products, nuts and legumes)
- Choose a variety of local, fresh and healthy sources to eat every day
- Aim for 4–6 servings of energy foods each day (refer to picture for serving size)

### WHY?

- Energy foods, particularly local and fresh sources, provide:
  - energy for mothers and also for baby's development
  - dietary fibre for overall wellness of mothers and the developing baby
- Note: the consumption of energy foods needs to be controlled to avoid excess weight gain for both mother and the developing baby

## 5 Stay hydrated/drink plenty of clean and safe water

- Drink clean and safe water everyday – can include fresh coconut juice and milk but water is the best choice!
- Avoid sugar-sweetened drinks, energy drinks and drinks that have caffeine and tannins
- Aim to drink at least 6–8 cups of fluids each day

### WHY?

- Good hydration is essential to maintain body fluid balance
- Water is essential to life, it:
  - keeps the body cool in hot temperatures
  - helps the body remove waste and prevent constipation
  - carries oxygen and nutrients to body cells
  - helps with weight control
- Sugary drinks are high in energy and low in essential nutrients – they will contribute to weight gain of both mother and baby
- Caffeine may affect the baby's growth and tannins in tea will affect the absorption of iron from meals

## 6 Avoid Alcohol

- Alcohol is harmful and there is no safe level of alcohol use at any stage of pregnancy

### WHY?

- Alcohol, even in small amounts is transported to the baby
- Alcohol affects the baby's development, especially of the brain

## 7 Eat less fat, salt and sugar

### Fat:

- Choose foods low in fat, especially saturated fat (e.g. fatty meat, butter, ghee, lard)
- Choose lean meat and low-fat or reduced-fat foods
- Avoid processed meats (e.g. canned) as they are high in fat and salt
- Avoid processed, baked and fried foods as they are usually high in fat, especially trans fats

### WHY?

- Fats and oils are energy-dense and will contribute to weight gain as well as increase the risk of high cholesterol and development of NCDs

### Salt:

- Choose foods that are low in salt and sodium
- Reduce salt and foods high in salt in food preparation (e.g. soya sauce, table salt)
- Use herbs and spices for flavouring instead of salt
- Look out for hidden salt (e.g. salty snacks, soya sauce, bread)

### WHY?

- Diets high in sodium (including salt) increase the risk of high blood pressure, which can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke

### Sugar:

- Choose foods and drinks that are low in sugar and added sugar
- Choose seasonal fresh fruits as snacks
- As a general rule, any item that contains more than 10 g of added sugar is considered unhealthy

### WHY?

- Foods and drinks high in sugar are high in energy, but low in essential nutrients
- A diet high in sugar contributes to weight gain and increases the risk of gestational diabetes, which can harm both mother and baby

**Food safety during pregnancy is very important – cook food well and store it safely!**

For further information, please contact your local health provider.

For more resources for healthy eating for pregnant women, Contact: NCD Team: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)

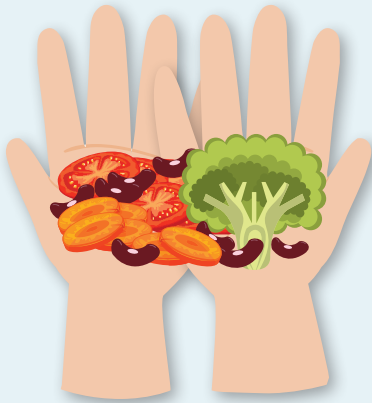


# FACTSHEET 12

## GUIDE TO PORTION SIZES

Knowing and watching your portion sizes is a key factor in helping to prevent and manage your weight and non-communicable diseases. Using our hands can be an easy way to check the size of our food portions. Given the differences in hand sizes, when serving for someone else use the size of their hand as a guide for their portions.

How much can you eat from the three food groups?

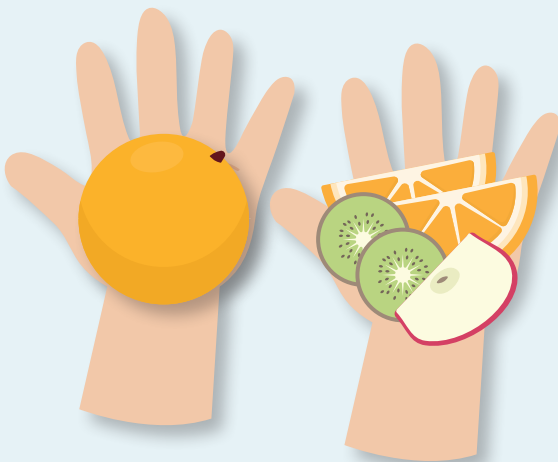


### **Protective foods: vegetables (non-starchy)**

Your two hands cupped together is a good guide for the amount of non-starchy vegetables like carrots, tomatoes, beans, taro leaves, broccoli or cauliflower to include in your meal – include more if you can.

Tip: Choose locally grown or frozen vegetables with no added salt. Include all the colours of the rainbow – each colour provides a different range of nutrients.

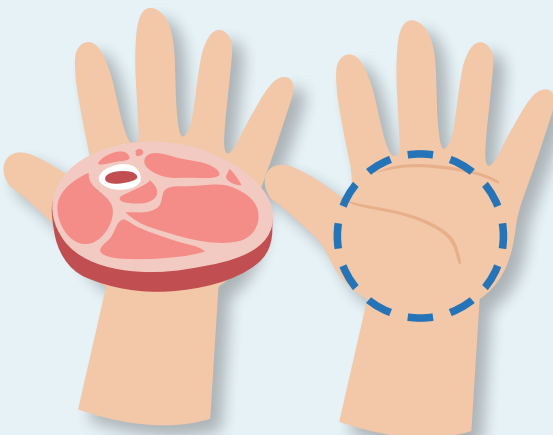
**Eat three or more portions each day**



### **Protective foods: fruits**

A single portion of fruit is what fits into the palm of your hand.

**Eat two or more portions each day**

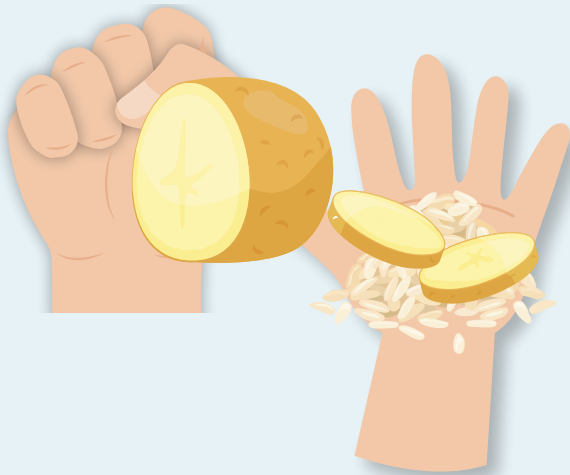


### **Body building foods: poultry or meat, legumes and nuts**

A palmful of red meat, chicken, pork, legumes, beans or nuts represents a portion.

Tip: The thickness of the meat should be about the same thickness as the palm of your hand.

**Eat at least one to two portions each day**

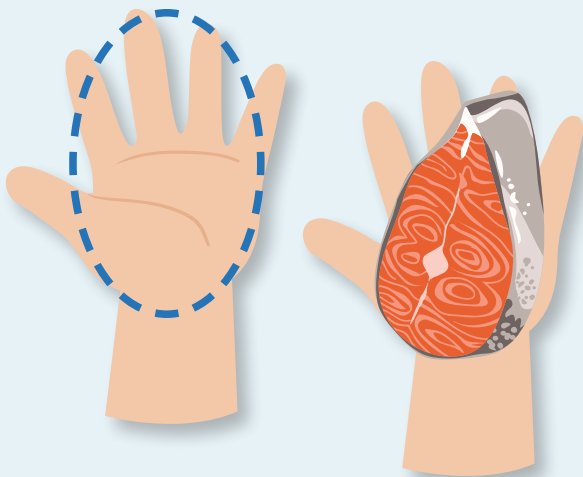


**Energy foods: eat at least six portions each day**

A portion of root crops and starchy vegetables is the size of your closed fist. This group includes foods like breadfruit, cooked green bananas, potatoes, taro, whole grain bread or rice.

Energy foods should make up half (50%) of all the food you eat each day.

A portion of legumes is also the size of your closed fist. Legumes include chickpeas, lentils and beans.



**Energy foods: fish**

The whole of your hand is a good portion guide for a piece of fish.



**Remember: Eating the right portion is important for good health**

For further information, please contact your local health provider. For more resources on portion sizes and healthy living, contact: [ncd\\_team@spc.int](mailto:ncd_team@spc.int)



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