



## **British Heart Foundation 2010**

A prescription for heart health in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales



Heart and circulatory disease in the UK

Our Recommendations

BHF Commitment

**Heart and circulatory disease is the UK's biggest killer. It is still responsible for approximately a third of all deaths in the UK. There cannot be a family that has not been affected.**

The UK has enviable healthcare systems free at the point of need. And yet many other EU member states perform better in the provision of heart health care, with consequently lower rates of premature death.

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**We need a bold approach from the governments across the UK to reduce the incidence of heart and circulatory disease to the lowest level in Western Europe within a generation.**

This document is intended for candidates and parties standing in the UK General election in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Although health is devolved in these nations, this document sets out some important recommendations that we hope MPs from these countries will take on in the forthcoming Westminster Parliament – and that will help protect people's heart health across the UK.

There has been some significant progress on preventing heart and circulatory disease in recent years across the UK, including:

- legislative measures and tobacco control strategies to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and to put tobacco beyond the reach of children
- national frameworks and strategies to drive up standards for treatment and care
- a supportive environment that facilitates cardiovascular research, including stem cell research and regenerative medicine.

These must be preserved to protect the heart health of the UK.

But we need to go further and faster if we are serious about tackling the UK's biggest killer. The coming decade will bring new challenges with demographic changes, shifts in the burden of disease and a more stringent financial climate. The prevalence of heart and circulatory disease remains disproportionately high amongst people living in disadvantaged circumstances and from particular ethnic groups. Tackling inequalities such as these requires sustained commitment from all UK governments.

**The British Heart Foundation (BHF) is the UK's heart charity. Although many of the powers that relate to heart and circulatory disease are devolved, there are a number of areas where the next Westminster Government can protect Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales' heart health.**

## Tackling obesity

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Obesity is a risk factor for heart and circulatory disease. Research has suggested that while rises in overweight or obesity amongst children are slowing down, they are still unacceptably high. Obesity trends amongst adults are continuing to increase. Urgent action is needed in the following areas if the obesity epidemic is to be tackled.

- Protect children's health by **extending current restrictions on marketing foods high in fat, sugar and salt to non broadcast media** including the Internet and **introducing a ban on advertising of these products before the 9pm watershed.**
- Ensure that consumers are able to make healthy food choices by championing the inclusion of traffic light colours in a **single front of pack food labelling scheme** in the European Union and implementing the Food Standards Agency's single integrated model across the UK.

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***Protect children's health by introducing a ban on advertising unhealthy foods before the 9pm watershed.***

## Tobacco control

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Smoking is a key risk factor for heart and circulatory disease, and smokers are almost twice as likely as non smokers to have a fatal heart attack. Estimates suggest that smoking causes over 25,000 deaths from heart disease in the UK a year. Urgent action is needed on a number of levels if further progress is to be made in reducing deaths from heart disease, the UK's biggest killer.

- **Crackdown on tobacco smuggling** and resulting illicit tobacco sales, eradicating this as a cheap source of cigarettes for young people and those from economically deprived backgrounds. BHF wants to see an integrated approach at national, regional and local level to crackdown on smuggling, and new targets on reducing illicit tobacco entering the UK.
- Prohibit all **advertising of tobacco accessories** such as cigarette papers and all forms of marketing of tobacco and tobacco paraphernalia designed to recruit new smokers in films or through other forms of entertainment.
- **Increase tax on tobacco** in real terms and reinvest revenue raised in cessation services across the UK to provide all the support necessary for smokers to quit.
- Introduce **plain packaging for all tobacco products**: this will increase the effectiveness of health warnings and reduce misconceptions about the risks of smoking. Package design is an important part of the advertising process for tobacco products. Research demonstrates that branding of cigarette packs makes cigarettes more attractive to young people.

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## BHF Commitment

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The BHF has been at the forefront of many of the most important achievements in cardiovascular research for the past 49 years. In the coming decade, we will continue to fund pioneering research into the causes, treatment and prevention of heart and circulatory disease.

We also provide support to people throughout the UK who are living with, or at risk of, heart and circulatory disease. We do this through our BHF nurses and other healthcare professionals, our publications, our helpline and our events in the community.

We are committed to concentrating BHF resources in those parts of the UK that have the highest incidence of disease to help reduce inequalities, through our Hearty Lives programme. Sustained action will be required by governments across the UK if inequalities in heart health are to be tackled effectively.

The BHF campaigns to ensure that all heart patients receive gold standard treatment and care, irrespective of where they live in the UK, and to ensure that we have a supportive environment to make healthy lifestyle choices, easy choices.

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***We are committed to concentrating BHF resources in those parts of the UK that have the highest incidence of cardiovascular disease to help reduce inequalities.***

## Get in touch with the BHF

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The BHF is the nation's heart charity dedicated to saving lives through pioneering research, patient care, campaigning for change and providing vital information to help people care for their own heart health.

Work with us to ensure that tackling heart and circulatory disease - the UK's biggest killer – remains a priority issue at Westminster for the benefit of those living in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

**For further information about the BHF's call to action to protect heart health in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and to be put in touch with public affairs staff in each country in the UK please email [westminster@bhf.org.uk](mailto:westminster@bhf.org.uk) or call 020 7554 0151.**

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***Get in touch and find out more about how you can help protect Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland's heart health.***

# BEATING HEART DISEASE TOGETHER



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