

The silent killers

High Blood Pressure, Cholesterol and Diabetes

Did you know that every hour, a man, woman or child dies from heart disease and stroke in Ireland? High blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood sugar are major reasons for these premature deaths. High blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood sugar (an indicator of diabetes) are mostly symptom-less, however they are known “silent killers” as if high they greatly increase your risk of death or serious disability from the likes of heart attack, angina, stroke and other coronary illnesses.

High Blood pressure-The Silent Killer

High blood pressure is often called the silent killer with many people not realising they have it until it is too late, for example after they have suffered a stroke or heart attack.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death worldwide, with two-thirds of cerebrovascular disease (eg Stroke) and half of ischaemic heart disease (eg Angina) being attributable to high blood pressure. In Ireland in 2000, CVD was the number one cause of death and was responsible for 41% of all deaths. High Blood Pressure (BP) affects up to 50% of middle-aged and older people. High BP has no symptoms so routine checks are essential, especially on those over 50.

Trials have shown that achieving a target blood pressure of 140/90 mmHG achieves a 42% reduction in stroke, a 14% reduction in coronary events such as myocardial infarction (heart attack) and a 21% reduction in cardiovascular deaths. There is evidence that high BP can predispose individuals to the development of cognitive impairment and dementia in later life.

All adults should have their blood pressure measured routinely every 5 years. According to the 2003 European Society of Hypertension classification of blood pressure values, optimal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mmHG.

High Cholesterol- The Silent Killer

The amount of cholesterol present in the blood can range from 3.6 to 7.8 mmol/litre. A level above 6 mmol/litre is considered high, and a risk factor for arterial disease. A Total Cholesterol level of below 5.2 mmol/litre is recommended to prevent heart disease. Evidence strongly indicates that high cholesterol levels can cause narrowing of the arteries (atherosclerosis), heart attacks, and strokes. The risk of coronary heart disease also rises as blood cholesterol levels increase. If other risk factors, such as high blood pressure and smoking, are present, the risk increases even more.

High cholesterol is not a disease in itself, but it is linked to serious conditions, such as cardiovascular conditions (disease of the heart and blood vessels), angina, stroke, and mini-stroke, known as transient ischemic attack (TIA). A high level of cholesterol in your blood, together with a high level of triglycerides, can increase your risk of developing coronary heart disease.

Coronary heart disease is caused by narrowing of the arteries that supply the heart with blood. This narrowing of the arteries is called atherosclerosis. Fatty deposits, such as cholesterol, cellular waste products, calcium and other substances build up in the inner lining of an artery. This build up, known as plaque, usually affects small and medium sized arteries. The flow of blood through the arteries is restricted as the inside diameter is reduced. Blood clots, which often happen in the coronary arteries during a heart attack, are more likely to develop when arterial walls are roughened by the build-up of fatty deposits.

Uncontrolled Diabetes: The Silent Killer

The Diabetic Federation of Ireland estimate there are over 200,000 diabetics in Ireland and that over half of these have no idea they have diabetes. Diabetes is one of the leading causes of death in the world. It is now reaching epidemic proportions mainly due to our increasing sedentary lifestyle and poor diet. According to the World Health Organisation, there were 30 million diabetics in the world in 1985, today there are approximately 230 million diabetics and this figure is expected to rise to 330 million in 20 years' time if we do not take action.

Diabetes mellitus (Type 2 Diabetes) is a condition that occurs when the body can't use glucose normally. Glucose is the main source of energy for the body's cells. The levels of glucose in the blood are controlled by a hormone called insulin, which is made by the pancreas. Insulin helps glucose enter the cells. It does tend to run in families but being overweight is a major factor for Type 2 Diabetes. Untreated diabetes can lead to serious complications therefore early treatment is essential. Complications of untreated diabetes include heart disease, stroke, eye problems, erectile dysfunction, kidney disease, loss of feeling and sensation due to nerve damage, gangrene in the foot.

Do you know your numbers?

When was the last time you got your:

- Blood Pressure Checked?
- Cholesterol Checked?
- Blood Sugar (Diabetes) Checked?
- Body Mass Index Checked?

High blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood sugar (an indicator of diabetes) are mostly symptom-less, however they are known "silent killers". Screening could save your life.

Get screened

Do not miss your chance to find out what some important indicators are. Don't wait until it is too late; book your health checks today!

What? Health Checks

Checking what? Cholesterol, Blood Pressure, Diabetes, Body Mass Index

Where? Whelehans Pharmacy

How? Tel 044 9334591 to book your screening

Cost: all for €20

It will only take you 15 minutes and results are instantaneous. Our health checks are not meant as alternative to check up from your GP. If your cholesterol, blood pressure, blood glucose or BMI are high then we will refer you to your GP for full screening and follow up.

Health checks at Whelehans Pharmacy, 38 Pearse St, Mullingar (Opposite the Greville Arms Hotel). Tel 04493 34591. www.whelehans.ie or info@whelehans.ie. Find us on Facebook