



**World  
PT Day  
2026**

# CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Cardiovascular diseases are the **leading cause of death globally**



**20.5 million**

**lives** are lost each year through cardiovascular disease (CVD)

**30%**

of all **global deaths** are caused by CVD

**85%**

of these are due to **heart attack and stroke**

**>3/4**

of CVD deaths occur in **low and middle income countries**

## Prevention

Most CVDs can be prevented by addressing behavioural and environmental risk factors:



**tobacco use**



harmful use of **alcohol**



unhealthy **diet** and obesity



**air pollution**



**physical inactivity**

Globally, **high blood pressure** is the leading **risk factor** for CVD

## What is cardiovascular disease?

CVD is a general term for **conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels**. These conditions can make it harder for blood, oxygen, and nutrients to move around the body the way they should.

Over time, blood vessels can become narrowed, stiff, or blocked, and the heart may have to work harder than normal. This can reduce blood flow to important organs like the brain, heart, and muscles, increasing the risk of problems such as heart attack or stroke.



## How can physiotherapy help prevent CVD?

Physiotherapists are part of the healthcare team that provides patient-centred care. They:



**can help identify people at higher risk of heart disease**, such as those with high blood pressure, diabetes, or obesity, or people who lead an inactive lifestyle, and assess how well a person can move and exercise



**design safe, personalised exercise programmes** to improve fitness and lower heart disease risk, and support healthy lifestyle changes, such as being more active and managing weight



**promote early detection and early action** to prevent serious health problems, and spot warning signs and refer patients to further medical care when needed



## How can physiotherapy help people who have CVD?

A physiotherapist can help people manage their CVD, and reduce the chance of further cardiac events (eg a heart attack) by:

- helping to identify an individual's main **risk factors** and advise on how to make permanent healthy lifestyle changes
- providing tailored exercise programmes and help people **overcome any fears** they may have about exercising
- educating people on the best ways to help **prevent** further heart problems
- improving fitness, helping people **stay active** and enjoy a better **quality of life**
- offering advice and support on how to **self-manage** the condition



## Best exercises for heart health



**Aerobic exercise keeps your heart healthy:** it makes everyday activities easier, so you feel less tired or short of breath. It can also improve your mood, help you sleep better, and lower your risk of heart problems.



**Resistance training builds strength:** as you get stronger you can do daily activities and exercise more easily, and with less effort.



**Balance and flexibility exercises help you move safely:** stretching keeps your muscles from becoming tight, helping you move more easily, and reduce pain or injury. Balance exercises help you stay steady and lower your risk of falls.

If you have CVD, or are at risk, seek advice from a physiotherapist or health professional before going back/starting to exercise.



**World  
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**#WorldPTDay**

**8 September**

[www.world.physio/wptday](http://www.world.physio/wptday)