Detecting CHD

There are several ways in which Coronary Heart Disease can be diagnosed.

An **ECG** test can tell if your heart is working healthily, if you have CHD and if you've previously suffered a heart attack. When combined with controlled exercise, an ECG can identify if the CHD is mild or serious.


An example of the result of an ECG test

An **angiogram** test will find out if your arteries are blocked and if so how severe the blockage is. This is an invasive procedure and is done under anesthetic.

Although not a direct measure of heart disease, the level of cholesterol in the blood is a good indication of the health of your blood vessels. This can be determined with a simple **blood test**.
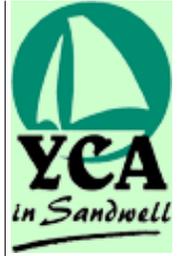
Websites for more information about Coronary Heart Disease

The British Heart Foundation
http://www.bhf.org.uk/

or

The NHS Direct Health Encyclopaedia
http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/alphaindex.aspx

**Yemeni Community Association
In Sandwell**

Greets Green Access Centre
Tildasley Street
West Bromwich

Phone: 525 3909
Fax: 580 4979

Coronary Heart Disease

**Yemeni Community Association
In Sandwell**

Yemeni Community Association

Tel: 525 3909
Fax: 580 4979

Coronary heart Disease

Introduction to CHD

Your heart needs oxygen from your blood in order to work properly. Coronary heart disease is caused when the blood vessels that supply the heart with blood (the coronary arteries) become narrow and the flow of blood is reduced.

If the heart does not get enough blood, a pain known as angina may be felt.

If a coronary artery becomes completely blocked, and a portion of the heart is without blood, a heart attack will occur.

Illustration of an artery that is very blocked by a plaque of fat and cholesterol
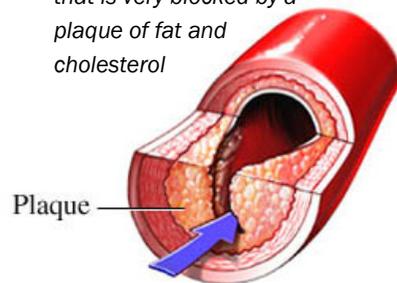
Plaque

What causes CHD?

The main cause of Coronary Heart Disease is arteriosclerosis. Excess fats and cholesterol in the blood are deposited on the walls of the blood vessels. Over time, these fatty deposits build up to form 'plaques' which narrow and harden the arteries and prevent proper blood flow.

Other causes of CHD include blood clots, which can get stuck in the blood vessels, particularly if they are already narrowed by arteriosclerosis , and high blood pressure, which puts extra strain on the heart.

Preventing and treating CHD

There are several ways to treat CHD, including a wide range of medicines and surgical procedures. Your doctor should talk you through them if you are diagnosed.

However, prevention is better than treatment, and there are many simple ways in which you can reduce your risk of CHD.

These include

- Exercising

- Eating Healthily

- Reducing Fat and Salt intake

- Stop Smoking

- Reduce Alcohol consumption

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