

Fewer people in Wales dying from heart disease – new report

Cardiovascular (heart and circulatory) disease is the biggest killer in Wales, causing more than a quarter (27%) of all deaths, or over 9,000 deaths each year – an average of 25 each day.

There are an estimated 375,000 people living with cardiovascular disease in Wales – 4% of the population.

The Welsh Government's Annual Statement of Progress on Heart Disease reveals the rate of deaths for all heart conditions has fallen over the past five years. It shows:

- Over the last 20 years in Wales, there has been a 68% reduction in the rate of people dying from premature coronary heart disease, before the age of 75; Since 2009 alone, there's been a 20% reduction, due in part to the improved detection of heart disease amongst GPs, the ban on smoking in public places and other public health interventions, and better treatments within the NHS
- The number of people dying from a heart attack has fallen by 134 over the last five years, to 1,478
- The number of people dying from heart failure has reduced by nearly 40% in the last five years (by 192 deaths, to 332 deaths in 2015)
- There has been a steady reduction in the number of people dying from cardiovascular disease – with 1,000 fewer people a year dying compared to 5 years ago. In 2010 just over 10,000 people died from cardiovascular disease, by 2015 this had fallen to just over 9,000.

The report also shows:

- The Welsh NHS is treating patients quicker and closer to home: Through investments in community cardiology, health boards have all developed innovative approaches that allow patients to be diagnosed, assessed and where appropriate treated in their local community.
- A reduction in the number of people being treated for coronary heart disease: The number of people being treated by their GP for coronary heart disease has fallen gradually in recent years. Since 2008-09 there has been a reduction of 10,105 patients being treated by their GP for coronary heart disease
- More patients undertaking cardiac rehabilitation than ever before: Cardiac rehabilitation offers lifestyle advice and support, including guidance on diet and exercise. It helps people with heart disease to manage their condition and reduce the risk of repeat attacks and hospital readmissions. In 2015-16, 59% of eligible patients sought support following a procedure. This is a 17% increase on the previous year, when 42% of the patients eligible in Wales took part.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Heart disease is a major killer in Wales, particularly affecting our poorer communities, with 1 in 7 men and nearly 1 in 10 women dying from the disease.

“The report shows the Welsh NHS has made continued progress in improving the care of patients with heart disease. We’ve seen a steady decline in the rate of people dying from all cardiovascular disease, thanks to advances in the field of medicine and improvements in lifestyle behaviours which reduce the risk of developing or dying from cardiovascular disease. But the biggest reduction has been in the rate of people under the age of 75 dying early from coronary heart disease, with a 68% reduction over the last 20 years.

“But we’re determined to improve this further. One avoidable death is one too many – we know there’s more to do in treating and preventing heart disease.”