

Personalised health checks to be considered in new review

The Health and Social Care Secretary has announced an evidence-based review into the NHS Health Check service.

The checks are currently offered to everyone aged between 40 and 74 to spot the early signs of major conditions that cause early death, including stroke, kidney disease, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

However, the checks pay little attention to people's individual risks or needs.

The review will explore how to improve the system, with a focus on offering personalised interventions based on factors such as:

- age
- where people live
- DNA

The changes are part of a wider move away from blanket approaches to public health, to an approach that takes personal choices into account.

The new health checks will draw on lessons learned from cancer, for example, which is the most advanced area of personalised medicine in terms of detection and treatment.

The review will also explore:

- a special check-up for people approaching retirement age to help prevent or delay future care needs
- increasing the range of advice the checks can offer – for example, prevention of musculoskeletal problems or early action on hearing loss
- ways to increase the uptake of health checks
- the digitisation of health checks where appropriate

An intelligent check might target drinking advice at 40 to 49-year-olds, as alcohol use is more common in this age group.

70 to 74-year-olds could be targeted with advice on how to reduce their blood pressure.

Those at low risk of cardiovascular disease may benefit from less frequent,

online check-ups.

However, it is recognised that people with mental health problems, who in general find it hard to access standard care and are at higher risk of cardiovascular disease, would be unlikely to use digital services.

Over the last 5 years, the NHS Health Check programme has identified over 700,000 people at high risk of cardiovascular disease and it has saved an estimated 500 lives each year. But there is potential for people to benefit even more from a more tailored service.

Over 14 million people, 90% of the eligible population, have been offered an NHS Health Check in the last 5 years and almost 7 million have taken up the offer.

The [NHS Long Term Plan](#) committed to preventing 150,000 heart attacks, strokes and cases of dementia.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“Personalised, preventative healthcare is mission critical to the future-fit healthcare service we want to build. We must harness the latest technology and techniques to move away from the one-size-fits-all approach of the past.

“The review we are announcing today will be an important step towards achieving that, helping us to find data-led, evidenced-based ways to support people to spot, manage and prevent risks to their health through targeted intervention.”

Public Health Minister Jo Churchill said:

“Through the power of cutting-edge technology, we will end the one-size-fits-all approach to healthcare and tailor NHS services to individual patients to help people live longer, healthier and happier lives.

“Our aim is to build a truly preventative, personalised and predictive health and care service through our NHS Long Term Plan to improve the health of the nation for years to come.”