

Heart Disease: A Public Health Perspective

Module Name: Introduction to Public Health

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Student Name: Sujan Gurung

Student ID: 2434781

Lecture's Name: Dr Christopher Mafuva

1.Introduction

Heart disease, commonly referred to as coronary heart disease (CHD), is a condition that affects the heart's blood supply. It occurs when the coronary arteries, which supply oxygen-rich blood to the heart, become narrowed or blocked, leading to reduced blood flow. This can result in serious complications, including heart attacks and heart failure (British Heart Foundation, 2023).

Heart disease is a major public health issue because it is common both worldwide and in the UK. It remains a leading cause of illness and death, placing a significant burden on individuals, families, and healthcare systems (World Health Organisation, 2022; NHS, 2023). Many risk factors for heart disease—such as poor diet, physical inactivity, smoking, and high blood pressure—are preventable, highlighting the role of public health interventions.

Purpose of this report:

- Explore signs and symptoms of heart disease
- Analyse impact on individuals, families, and the community
- Discuss the burden on the NHS
- Highlight the importance of prevention and management

• **Signs and Symptoms**

Common symptoms of heart disease include:

- Chest pain (angina): Pressure, tightness, or discomfort in the chest
- Shortness of breath: Difficulty breathing, especially during physical activity
- Fatigue: Persistent tiredness or lack of energy
- Dizziness or nausea: Feeling faint or unwell
- Heart attack symptoms: Severe chest pain, sweating, and pain radiating to the arm, jaw, or back

2.Main Body

A. Consequences of Heart Disease in the Community

Impact on Individuals:

- Reduced quality of life
- Long-term medication
- Physical limitations
- Risk of disability or premature death (British Heart Foundation, 2023)

Impact on Families and Carers:

- Emotional stress and anxiety
- Caring responsibilities
- Financial pressure (World Health Organisation, 2022)

Social Consequences:

- Time off work or unemployment

- Social isolation
- Increased health inequalities (NHS, 2023)

B. Consequences of Heart Disease for the NHS

Heart disease places a substantial burden on healthcare services:

- Increased GP appointments
- High hospital admissions
- Emergency services for heart attacks
- Long-term treatment and follow-up care
- Cost of medication, surgery, and rehabilitation
- Pressure on NHS resources and staff (British Heart Foundation, 2023)

These challenges are further intensified by an ageing population and the rise in long-term conditions (World Health Organisation, 2022).

3. Conclusion

Heart disease is a serious public health issue with widespread consequences for individuals, families, and society. It significantly impacts quality of life, causes emotional and financial strain, and places heavy demands on the NHS.

Early detection, effective management, and preventative measures—such as promoting healthy lifestyles—are essential to reduce its burden. Addressing heart disease aligns with public health goals of improving population health, preventing illness, and reducing health inequalities (NHS, 2023; World Health Organisation, 2022).

References

- British Heart Foundation (2023) What is coronary heart disease? Available at: <https://www.bhf.org.uk> (Accessed: 16 December 2025)
- NHS (2023) Coronary heart disease. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk> (Accessed: 16 December 2025)
- World Health Organisation (2022) Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs). Available at: <https://www.who.int> (Accessed: 16 December 2025)