

## HEALTH HEART

## RISK FACTORS

Add up these ticks to see if you are at risk:

- ✓ Raised cholesterol.
- ✓ Smoking.
- ✓ High blood pressure.
- ✓ Diabetes.
- ✓ Obesity.
- ✓ Stress.
- ✓ Lack of exercise.
- ✓ Gender – more men than women get coronary heart disease.
- ✓ Age – risk increases with age

Note: The more ticks you have on your list, the more likely you are to have heart disease and to need to see a doctor.

## BLOCKAGE SYMPTOMS

Symptoms that show that your pipes and pump (arteries and heart) are developing problems are:

- Chest pain.
- Being out of breath.
- Feeling sweaty.
- Feeling sick, unwell or weak.
- Unexplained levels of tiredness no matter how much sleep you get – the most common symptom.

## TIPS FROM DR KELLY

- Have your blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked.
- Lose weight if your waist is bigger than 37 inches for a man and 32 inches for a woman.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day.

## HEALTHY HEART TIPS FOR CHRISTMAS

- 1 Take a walk to get your heart pumping.
- 2 Swap fatty foods like full cream for crème fraiche or natural yoghurt.
- 3 Go easy on the booze
- 4 Steer clear of crisps and salted nuts – salt increases blood pressure.
- 5 Indulge in brussels sprouts – packed with vitamins and goodness.
- 6 Remember an extra 500 calories a day will mean a pound gained each week over Christmas.
- 7 Think carrot cake muffins for Rudolph (and everyone else) rather than cookies.
- 8 Eat breakfast so that you won't be snacking on mince pies by mid-morning – snacks add up. A mince pie can contain from 250 – 500 calories depending on its size.
- 9 Savour flavours, chew slowly and enjoy your food – and add in an extra helping of vegetables to your dinner.

– Healthy heart tips from Irish Heart Foundation.

## INFORMATION

About half of Irish adults over 50 years of age have high blood pressure. For more tips, see [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie).

## Unmasking humanity



[www.fionahoban.ie](http://www.fionahoban.ie)

On a weekend retreat, **Fiona Hoban** notices how going without TV and technology unmasks who we really are

Children are very funny when they take a fall – if they think nobody has witnessed it, they often get up again and go about their business. It's a very different story if they detect an audience.

We, as adults, can be the complete opposite. We are mortified if we think anybody has seen us take a stumble, and are in a great hurry to get up again without any fuss.

I recently attended a weekend retreat at the Burren Yoga and Meditation Centre just outside Kinvara in Co Galway ([www.burrenyoga.ie](http://www.burrenyoga.ie)). One of the participants took a stumble as the group was heading to the kitchen for dinner. Her initial reaction was fairly typical – she got up almost as fast as she went down, wanting no fuss and insisting she was fine.

But it was apparent to the rest of the group that she had taken a bit of a knock, and we all rallied around her. She became quite emotional at this stage and David, the owner, took her into another room to double check she was OK.

Meanwhile, we sat down to dinner. I was completely taken aback at how such a relatively minor event had impacted on us.

We were all quiet and subdued. At one stage, I thought I might start crying myself. When she returned to join us for dinner (perfectly fine, thank God) it



was only then that our energy picked up and the fun and laughter resumed.

However, the episode stayed with me all weekend and I couldn't quite figure out why. But I think it was this: Yes, the weekend re-

treat revolved around yoga and meditation and guided outings in the Burren.

But it was more than that. There was no TV, no mobile phones, and no alcohol. This cut out a lot of what consumes us on a day-to-

day basis. So we were left with ourselves and we were left with each other.

I suppose, we were unmasked in some way, became more real. This allowed us all to respond fully and openly to someone who had a bit of a fall. We were able to feel for her and we were able to freely express this.

She, herself, said to me afterwards that it wasn't the shock of the fall that made her emotional, but rather the honest and genuine concern that we had shown her. It touched her.

Our kindness literally brought her to tears. And I realised that doing without TV and modern technology naturally brings us back in touch with our humanity. This is not some revolutionary insight, it's common sense. But, unfortunately, common sense doesn't always mean common practice. **CL**

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