

Heart age test a 'wake up call' for those at risk

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A new study by Staffordshire University shows that people who understand their 'heart age' are more likely to make healthy lifestyle changes.

50 [preventable deaths](#) from heart attack or stroke happen every day and Public Health England's online Heart Age Test (HAT) allows [users](#) to compare their real age to the predicted age of their heart.

The tool aims to provide early warning signs of cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk, encouraging members of the public to reduce their heart age through diet and exercise and to take up the offer of an NHS Health Check.

A new report by Staffordshire University's Centre for Health and Development (CHAD) in collaboration with Public Health England highlights the impact of the Heart Age Test.

Evaluation of user data found the [test](#) was completed almost 5 million times between February 2015 and June 2020. Engagement with the tool was higher in groups typically underrepresented in the NHS Health Check program including males, younger eligible adults and individuals from Indian and other ethnic backgrounds.

An [online survey](#) of more than 800 users and a sub-sample of follow-up interviews found that participants had a strong emotional response to their estimated heart age. Users understood the meaning of a higher estimated heart age, better understood their CVD risk and felt more in control of their health.

They were also more likely to take up the offer of an NHS Health Check, use the test again to check their heart health, and make changes to their lifestyle.

CHAD Research Associate Dr. Victoria Riley, who led the study, said that "deaths from [heart attack](#) or stroke are often preventable and so addressing health issues early is incredibly important. Our findings show that pre-screening tests, such as the HAT, can encourage individuals to

evaluate their lifestyle choices and increase their intentions to change behavior."

Some participants raised concerns about the accuracy of the test, largely because they did not know their [blood pressure](#) or cholesterol numbers when completing the HAT. Yet for many it served as a 'wake up call' with most users saying they would, or had already, recommended the test to others.

Victoria added that "there were some real success stories. We interviewed users, on average, a week after completing the HAT and were surprised that many had already made lifestyle changes. Being given an estimated heart age also makes it easier for people to understand their CVD risk and means that they are more likely to go away and find out more about their [heart health](#)—which could ultimately save lives."

More information: Full report: [www.chadresearch.co.uk/wp-content ... ion-Report-Final.pdf](http://www.chadresearch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Heart-Age-Test-Final-Report-Final.pdf)

Provided by Staffordshire University

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