

## News Release

Thursday June 22, 2011

### **Eat well for your heart**

People from south Asian backgrounds in Leicester are being reminded of the importance of eating healthier foods to improve their heart health.

As part NHS Leicester City's and Leicester City Council's Healthy Heart Campaign, Leicester's Healthy Heart, south Asian communities in the city are reminded that their cultural diet may contain high salt, fat and sugar content, three factors which can lead to serious heart problems.

Leicester's Healthy Heart initiative is challenging people to try and walk as many minutes as possible this summer to improve their health and fitness, and help reduce their risk of heart disease. Combining a good diet and exercise can dramatically improve our health.

Three well balanced meals a day can provide you with essential nutrients that the body needs such as fibre, vitamins, calcium and iron. Research shows people who eat three well balanced meals a day are less likely to be overweight, will lose weight more successfully and reduce their risk of developing serious health conditions such as heart disease and stroke. The South Asian population are twice as likely to die from heart disease than those in other cultures.

Aideen McKenna, public health dietician from the Leicestershire nutrition and dietetics service, speaking on behalf of NHS Leicester City, said: "A lot of the foods we eat can have a knock on effect on our hearts. A typical South Asian diet includes high fat and salt content which can lead to increase risk of a heart attack.

"Increased physical activity and small diet changes can really help to boost your heart health. Eat fruit as part of your diet instead of snacking on samosas and pakoras and you're on your way to five-a-day. Try cooking with low fat sprays and oils instead of fat and ghee.

"If you have heart problems already it's not too late. These small changes to your diet could make a big difference and combine these with walking, even if you walk just 10 minutes at a time, in the garden or to the local shop, it will build on your heart strength and your overall fitness."

Top tips for a healthier diet:

1. If you eat samosas regularly try to reduce the amount that you eat. Alternatively try baking samosas with a little oil brushed over the pastry instead of frying them.
2. Replacing butter and ghee with small amounts sunflower or olive spread prevents clogging of the main arteries in the heart.
3. Replace traditional sweet meats and treats with fruit and low-fat yoghurts.
4. Too much salt in our diet can lead to high blood pressure. Reduce salt in cooking and limit the amount of salty snacks.

5. Our bodies need a balanced diet and carbohydrates are important to fill us up such as chapatti, rice or potato but remember to include plenty of vegetables and salad too.

Gulshinder, added: "Habits can be difficult to change but the important step is to start making changes today no matter how small."

For more information about the Leicester's Healthy Heart campaign or to sign-up, visit [www.leicesterhealthyhearts.co.uk](http://www.leicesterhealthyhearts.co.uk). The NHS Choices website [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) has further information about making your diet healthier and improving your long term heart health.

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**For interviews or more information please contact press officer Liz Thomas on 0116 295 4123 or [liz.thomas@leicestercity.nhs.uk](mailto:liz.thomas@leicestercity.nhs.uk)**