

NHS Health Checks Could 'Save 650 Lives'

Around 15 million people are eligible for the checks which can identify heart disease or diabetes, the Health Secretary says.

Hundreds of lives could be saved every year if more people took advantage of NHS health checks, the Health Secretary has said.

A new review has found that checking 40 to 74-year-olds' blood pressure, cholesterol, weight and lifestyle could identify problems earlier and prevent 650 deaths, 1,600 heart attacks and 4,000 cases of diabetes a year.

Jeremy Hunt said thinking about personal health at an early stage is vital to living a long and prosperous life.

Before local authorities took over responsibility for commissioning the checks in April, there was considerable variation in how widely they were offered.

Now Public Health England, which leads the NHS Health Check programme, has launched a 10-point plan to help councils provide them to 20% of their eligible local population a year - 15 million people by 2018/19.

Mr Hunt said: "Around 15 million people in England are eligible for a free NHS Health Check that could identify serious conditions early and add years to their life.

"I'd like to see all 40 to 74-year-olds taking up this potentially life-saving opportunity. And I'd like to see the NHS and local authorities encouraging people in their area to get involved. We could save 650 lives a year if there was full take-up.

"We are an ageing population, and thinking about our health early is vital to living a long and prosperous life."

Professor Kevin Fenton, the director of health and wellbeing for Public Health England, said: "NHS Health Check programme offers a real opportunity to reduce avoidable deaths and disability, and tackle health inequalities in England.



Kevin Fenton Kevin Fenton from Public Health England

"We must do more to increase uptake and referral to appropriate risk management services, particularly in those communities at greatest risk, to remove blocks in processes that get in the way and make sure the programme is of consistent high quality across the country.

"We will establish an expert clinical and scientific advisory panel to review and advise on the evidence base and we will work with partners to develop a research and analysis programme to support the delivery and evaluation of the programme at both local and national levels."

Between 2010 and 2020 the number of people aged 65 and over is expected to rise by 27%, with those aged 85 and over rising by 44%.

The programme is for people aged 40-74 in England, and is focused on preventing conditions like heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease.

Source: Sky News