

# HEART PROGRAMME FOR PHARMACIES



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Cardiovascular diseases are the group of diseases causing the most deaths and the fourth significant disease group causing incapacity to work. The treatment of these diseases causes the largest direct treatment costs to the society, and, annually, almost 1.5 million Finns receive reimbursement for medicines used for their treatment. Cardiovascular diseases can be influenced with efficient prevention and treatment.

The goal of the heart programme for pharmacies is to promote the successful treatment of cardiovascular diseases and to recognise and support customers at high risk of acquiring these diseases. The programme concentrates on most common cardiovascular diseases and their underlying risk factors. The programme helps ensure the strong competence of pharmaceutical personnel in treating cardiovascular diseases and their prevention, and it strengthens the local co-operation between pharmacies and other types of health care providers and patient organisations. The co-operation helps guarantee common operational methods and counselling in every part of the patient's treatment chain, thereby contributing to the success of the patient's care.

The heart programme for the pharmacies was launched in 2005 to support **Suomen Sydänliitto's (The Finnish Heart Association) action programme** to promote Finnish cardiovascular health, and it is also in line with the joint project entity **Yksi elämä ('One Life')** by **Sydänliitto (The Finnish Heart Association), The Finnish Diabetes Association and Aivoliitto (The Finnish Brain Association)**.

The heart programme for the pharmacies is an entity providing guidelines for the operation. The Association of Finnish pharmacies coordinates operations nationally together with Sydänliitto (The Finnish Heart Association), informs the pharmacies of current news and organises training. The actual operational methods and models are agreed upon locally.

The pharmacies promote cardiovascular health together with other health care operators and organisations.

## Cardiovascular contact persons in pharmacies

The pharmacy participating in the heart programme appoints at least one pharmacist or qualified chemist to be the cardiovascular contact person in charge of carrying out the programme. The cardiovascular contact person learns about the treatment and prevention of cardiovascular diseases and coordinates the further training and in-service training related to cardiovascular diseases in the pharmacy.

The contact person promotes the local co-operation between doctors, pharmacies and nursing staff and operates as a link between the pharmacy and other local operators. The contact person also gets to know the operation of the regional heart association and other organisations and charts out the possibilities of joint activities.

## Local co-operation

Co-operation with other local health care providers and patient organisations, as well as other actors, is the prerequisite for the successful treatment and prevention of cardiovascular diseases. By meeting with different operators and getting to know their tasks and the range of available services, it is easier to learn how the municipality has organised the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases. When local operational methods and customer counselling are agreed upon, the consistency and extensiveness of information provided to the customer can be ensured. The cardiovascular contact person or the contact persons of local pharmacies together can be the initiators in the co-operation.



## The tasks of the cardiovascular contact person:

**LEARNING** about the treatment of cardiovascular diseases and coordinating cardiovascular diseases related further training and in-service training in the pharmacy.

**PROMOTING** local co-operation between doctors, pharmacies and nursing staff and operating as a link between the pharmacy and other local operators.

**FAMILIARISING** with the regional patient organisation activities and charting out joint operation possibilities. When possible, the pharmacy's public health contact persons work together to carry out all public health programmes in the pharmacy.

## Lifestyle guidance and recognising those at elevated risk of diseases

The pharmacies have an abundance of customer contacts, and the pharmacy also reaches such individuals who do not use other health care services. The lifestyle guidance gives support, in particular, in **quitting smoking, eating healthy, weight control and increasing physical exercise**. To support individual guidance, the pharmacy can offer high-quality material obtained from organisations or other sources. The pharmacy can be used as a place for gathering centralised information about support groups for lifestyle changes operating in the region, peer group activities and services where the customers can be referred to, if necessary.

In the prevention of heart diseases, it is important to pay attention to the assessment of the overall risk of arterial diseases, instead of single measurements. The customer is encouraged to find out the risk factors behind the emergence of arterial diseases, such as blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar values. Blood pressure can be measured at the pharmacy as a part of the overall risk assessment or treatment follow-up. Blood pressure is measured and guidance is given by a trained health care professional. Blood pressure values are recorded for the customer for follow-up purposes. If required, the customer is directed to contact other health care services.

Several pharmacies also carry out other measurements or tests related to the lifestyle choices or risk factors. Usually these activities take place in connection to **campaigns, events or theme days** organised jointly with

other health care providers or patient organisations. **National heart week** is the best known of these campaigns. Measurement or counselling events can be organised in co-operation with a local heart circle or organisation. At those events, the measurements and overall risk evaluation are carried out by health care professionals from the heart organisation.

## Supporting successful pharmacotherapy

Treatment success and adherence to treatment are obtained as a result of joint operations between the patient and all types of health care providers, and they require constant attention. At the beginning of the treatment, in particular, the patients need information in order to adopt the principles of the treatment and to commit themselves to the goals of the treatment. In addition, the patients with cardiovascular diseases using long-term medicine treatment need continuous support and motivation. This requires good co-operation between different health care facilities. The information provided to the customer must be consistent between all facilities.

People with regular pharmacotherapy visit pharmacies more often than other health care facilities. Persons with cardiovascular diseases or their family members visit the pharmacy at least four times a year. Therefore, the pharmacy has the possibility to ensure that the customers are aware of the correct and safe use of the medicine and that they adhere to their treatment. Together with the customer, the pharmacy staff discusses the implementation of the

pharmacotherapy and any issues that might influence it.

It is the duty of the pharmaceutical staff to provide the customer with guidance in any issues related to the use of the medicine. The customer is provided with information about the mode of action of the medicine and how, when and how long the medicine should be used. It is important to highlight that a **healthy lifestyle contributes to the success of the pharmacotherapy and to reaching the goal of the treatment**. It is also good to inform the customer of the most common adverse effects of the medicine and what to do if any of them should arise. When selecting self-care medicines, the customer's disease and other medication used must be considered in order to avoid negative interaction.

It is important to discuss the follow-up of the treatment. The pharmacy encourages the customer to perform self-monitoring of blood pressure and ensures that the customer is familiar with the target values for blood pressure. The product range of most pharmacies includes reliable blood pressure monitors suitable for home use. The customer is given guidance in their operation.

## Monitoring the overall medication

Pharmacotherapy is always individually customised. It is influenced by the disease and its difficulty level, any other diseases the patient may have, risk factors and costs of the treatment. Often combination therapy is required to reach the goal of the treatment. In addition, the number of



diseases and medicines used increases as the patient gets older. At the same time, the risk of medicine interaction and overlapping medication increases.

The information available at the pharmacies can be used to monitor the implementation of the customer's pharmacotherapy. The pharmacies also have the preparedness to **verify medicine interaction**. In problem situations, suitable solutions can be discussed in co-operation with the customer, the doctor and the nursing staff, in order to obtain successful pharmacotherapy. The service supply of many pharmacies also includes separate services available by appointment for verifying the overall medication and the success of the pharmacotherapy, such as a **reminder service for taking the medicine, a medication verification service and the overall evaluation of medication**.

## PHARMACY'S TASKS IN THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES

### MEDICINE COUNSELLING

- Counselling related to the medicines and pharmacotherapy and motivation for the correct use of medication and follow-up of the treatment.
- Following the implementation of the pharmacotherapy, recognising possible problems and solving them together with the doctor in charge and the customer.
- Referring to a nurse or a doctor, if necessary.
- Screening for any overlapping medicines or medicine interactions.
- Guidance in financially sensible methods for acquiring the medicines.
- Taking the disease and regular medication into account when selecting a suitable self-care product.
- Supporting lifestyle changes, among others, by sharing information about local activities and by using material suitable for the topic.
- Recognising customers at high risk of developing diseases and referring them for treatment.

### CO-OPERATION

- Agreeing about local operational methods, together with other health care providers and organisations.
- Participating in activities preventing cardiovascular diseases with other local operators.
- Sharing information about the activities of the heart organisation and other organisations and ensuring the availability of related material.

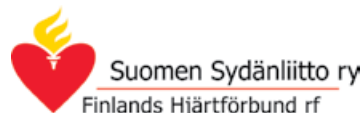
### LIFESTYLE

- Motivation to quit smoking.
- Providing information about the significance of a healthy diet, weight control and exercise in the prevention and treatment of diseases.



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