

## TRAFFORD GENERAL HOSPITAL

**Dr Petr Ruzicka**, cardiology consultant at Trafford General Hospital, advises on how to keep your heart healthy

# Put yourself at the heart of the matter

**T**HIS Valentine's Day, when you're busy making sure your sweetheart feels loved, remember it's just as important to look after the heart closest to you - your own.

**Q** WHAT kind of lifestyle changes can I make to keep my heart healthy?

**A** Stop smoking. The tar and chemicals in cigarettes damage the lining in coronary arteries, make the blood more susceptible to clotting and increase blood pressure and heart rate which puts extra strain on the heart.

Smokers are twice as likely to suffer a heart attack than non-smokers.

Make sure you get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day - even a brisk walk is better than nothing. One small change is always to climb the stairs instead of taking the lift. Eat a healthy and nutri-

tious diet that is low in fat, cholesterol and salt and high in fruit, vegetables and whole-grains.

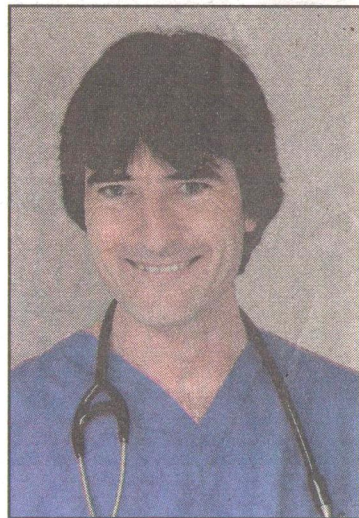
**Q** What are the risks associated with poor heart health?

**A** Smoking, high blood pressure, cholesterol, stress and lack of physical activity may lead to narrowing of coronary arteries which impairs blood supply to the heart and causes chest pain called angina.

Everybody should also have their blood pressure and cholesterol checked at least once every five years.

**Q** What is a heart attack and what are the symptoms?

**A** A heart attack is a sudden blockage of the blood supply to the heart muscle. Look out for a pressure-like discomfort, heaviness or tightness in the chest which may radiate to the neck, jaw



**ADVICE... Dr Petr Ruzicka**

and arm. Sudden breathlessness, sweating, anxiety, and light-headedness are also symptoms. But no two heart attacks are the same and symptoms can vary from person to person.

**Q** What if I'm not sure if this is a heart attack or not?

**A** If you're ever in doubt or suspicious, don't delay in calling 999. A heart attack is a medical emergency and every second counts - the sooner you seek medical help the greater your chance of survival.

■ To find out more about heart health, visit the British Heart Foundation website at [bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk).