

Women's Hearts Are Different

Women and men are different in so many ways!

Once thought to be the same but simply smaller than men, women are finally being recognized as being different in body, mind and spirit! We laugh and cry at different things and we even tend to enjoy and excel at different activities. From the chemical make-up in our brains to our physical bodies, we are different than men...and our hearts are no exception!

Cardiovascular disease is the #1 killer of women, regardless of race. It is more fatal than all forms of cancer combined and claims the lives of nearly 350,000 women every year. Why?

- ♥ Women typically develop heart disease later on in life when they may already be living with other health conditions, such as osteoporosis and Alzheimer's. These health conditions can mask the signs and symptoms of heart disease.
- ♥ Women are more likely to have less obvious heart attack symptoms, such as shoulder pain, nausea, vomiting and heart flutters.
- ♥ Since women do tend to experience "innocent" chest pain, physicians are more likely to ignore them as possible signs of heart disease.
- ♥ Most of the research conducted so far has been on men...new studies, however, are targeting women to advance diagnosis and treatment of their special and gender-specific needs. Scientists are studying whether women's smaller blood vessels (due to their smaller bodies) increase their heart disease risk since blood has a more difficult time passing through narrowed or smaller vessels, making them more vulnerable to blockage.
- ♥ Women tend to seek medical treatment later than men but ensure their husbands and fathers never miss an appointment!

Heart disease is one of the most preventable health concerns. Take action and make an investment in your heart health! Remember: one of the reasons this disease fatally affects more women than men is that women are reluctant to put themselves and their needs first. If this sounds like you, keep in mind that your family needs you to be healthy! The following can protect you from heart disease as well as improve your overall health:

♥ **Partner with your doctor.** Keep a list of signs and symptoms you feel may be indicators of heart disease (such as fatigue, lightheadedness, chest, neck or jaw pain, nausea or trouble breathing) and discuss your family history of heart disease. Have your blood cholesterol levels and blood pressure checked regularly – stay on top of your heart health with your physician!

* **Control other health conditions that increase your risk:**

* High blood pressure makes the heart work harder than normal. Women have an increased risk of developing high blood pressure if they are 20 or more pounds overweight, have a family history for it or have reached the age of menopause (more than 73% of women aged 65-74 have high blood pressure).

* Cholesterol is a soft fat-like substance found in all the body's cells. Abnormal blood cholesterol levels can lead to plaque building up on and within the artery walls, causing them to narrow or "shrink," which can reduce blood flow.

♥ **Avoid smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.** Women who smoke risk the occurrence of a heart attack 19 years earlier than non-smoking women.

♥ **Limit alcohol (no more than 1 drink a day).** Drinking too much raises blood pressure and triglyceride levels and can cause heart failure.

♥ **Maintain a healthy weight.** Two-thirds of Americans are overweight and one-third are obese. Don't become a "yo-yo" dieter; lose the excess fat and keep it off – for good.

♥ **Eat a balanced diet of foods that are rich in nutrients.** Focus on fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Avoid saturated fats, found in animal products, and trans fats, found in fried and processed foods, and monitor your sodium intake.

♥ **Enjoy 20-30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.** Exercise refreshes the system, flushes out toxins, gets our hearts and lungs pumping and clears and recharges the mind – get moving!

♥ **Reduce stress!** Take time out of the day for yourself: A simple 10 minutes of quiet time to rest and breathe deeply is an easy and effective method to melt away tension and stress. Massage, meditation, or a fabulous night out are also great ways to reduce stress.

You can greatly improve your longevity and quality of life by taking care of your heart and your overall health!

Aspiring Women