

HEALTH REPORT



A Woman's Heart Matters

Heart disease remains the leading killer among men and women in the United States. However, the rate of decline of heart disease for men has been much sharper than the rate of decline for women. Sadly, many people still see heart disease as a "male disease" and this causes many women to dismiss the risks, warning signs, and symptoms.

Every minute, a woman in America dies from heart disease. In fact, heart disease is the number one killer of women and is more deadly than all forms of cancer combined. While one in 31 American women die from breast cancer each year, it can be shocking to learn that one

in three women die from heart disease. To make matters worse, some healthcare professionals don't consider heart disease among women who experience symptoms of a heart attack. To combat this bias in our healthcare system, women must advocate for their heart health.

Some Staggering Statistics

The disparity between heart health among men and women is almost unbelievable:

- An estimated 44 million women in the U.S. are affected by cardiovascular diseases.

- 90% of women have one or more risk factors for heart disease or stroke.

- Implantable defibrillators can prevent sudden cardiac death. Unfortunately, men are 200 to 300 percent more likely to get this preventative measure.

- Women who are 45 years of age or younger are more likely than men of the same age to die within a year after their first heart attack.

- 64% of women and 50% of men who die suddenly from coronary heart disease had no previous symptoms of this disease.

- Race and ethnicity also affect risk. Nearly 44% of African American men and 48% of African American women have some form of cardiovascular disease.

Symptoms

The best way for women to advocate for their heart health is to be armed with information to inform their family members, friends, communities, and healthcare providers.

Both men and women often report having one or more of the following symptoms at the onset of a heart attack: chest pain, pressure, tightness, or a squeezing sensation; inability to take a deep breath; unusual sweating; sudden and spreading pain in the jaw, neck, shoulders, back, and stomach; intense feeling of heartburn, sometimes coupled with nausea and vomiting; and sudden dizziness, light-headedness, or a feeling of imbalance.

Women are more likely than men to experience these symptoms during a heart attack: pain and pressure in the trunk of the body that feels like gas or indigestion; nausea; unexplained muscle weakness or general fatigue; pain or discomfort in the shoulders; recurring chest pain that comes and goes without explanation; an emotional feeling of impending doom without cause; and stress and depression.

Women can experience all or some of the above symptoms. Call 911 if you experience any one of these symptoms. Don't make an excuse.

It's Important to Take Care of Your Heart

Here are some lifestyle tips to ensure that you and your loved ones are "heart smart!"

Annual Checkups: Even if you feel completely healthy, a checkup with a healthcare professional can catch disease before a major problem occurs.

Know Your Numbers: Regularly monitoring your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood glucose is one of the best ways to mitigate your risk of cardiovascular disease.

Eat Healthy: Limit your sodium and fat intake, cut your consumption of processed foods, boost the amount of fiber you eat, and have at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

Weight Matters: Maintaining a healthy weight is vital to good health and can significantly lower the risk of disease.

Get Moving: Exercise is another important aspect of overall health. The Surgeon General recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week for all adults.

It's Time to Quit: Smoking is a major contributor to cardiovascular disease. Also, alcohol consumption can increase blood pressure, and high blood pressure can lead to cardiovascular disease.

Think Globally, Act Locally

National campaigns, such as the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women, raise awareness and provide education on heart health for women through a variety of channels, such as the distribution of online education and cutting-edge research results, and online quizzes so women can assess their personal risk of heart disease. The campaign also shares prevention methods and inspiring stories of survival.

Right here in the Washington Metropolitan Area, Dimensions Healthcare System (DHS) is involved in a number of community activities to increase awareness of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and how it can impact heart health. DHS offers heart healthy screenings, such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and EKG screenings. An EKG screening is a test that checks for problems with the electrical activity of the heart, and is particularly beneficial for those individuals who have a high risk for heart-related issues.

Additionally, DHS partners with WomenHeart, an organization that seeks to improve the health and quality of life of women living with, or at risk of, heart disease. WomenHeart raises awareness about the importance of prevention and early detection, accurate diagnosis, and proper treatment of women's heart disease. The group meets the third Tuesday of every month from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Prince George's Hospital Center.

DHS is currently planning a women's heart health conference in the coming months. The conference will focus on providing high-quality, comprehensive, and practical knowledge as it relates to the importance of heart health, and showing how to incorporate heart-healthy choices into everyday life.

Through advocacy, awareness, and diligent self-care, women can protect their own heart health, as well as the hearts of those in their families and communities.

Together, we can save lives.

About this section: This special advertising section was prepared by independent writer Christa Rose Avampato. The production of this section did not involve the news or editorial staff of The Washington Post.

Yolanda swore retirement would be her time to live.



We're helping her live it with all her heart.



Recently retired, Yolanda Patterson was looking forward to more time with family. So, when her heart valve failed, she could almost feel the air rush out of her dreams.

Shortness of breath led her to tests at Prince George's Hospital Center and a sobering diagnosis: valve replacement *now*. The cardiac team eased her fears and made her feel "special." In less than a week, "they had saved my life." Today, she says, "It's hard to believe how much better I feel."

State-of-the-art heart surgery at Prince George's Hospital Center is helping patients like Yolanda live life with all their hearts. Visit www.CardiacCarePGCounty.org or call 301.618.2131 to find out just how close to home great cardiac care has come.

A powerful new partnership with the University of Maryland Medical Center is transforming cardiac care in Prince George's County.

