

Heart Disease in Women

“Heart disease is the number one cause of death in women today. Cardiovascular disease causes more than 480,000 (female) deaths each year,” said Dr. Alice Jacobs, Past President of the American Heart Association (AHA). “Yet,” Jacobs said, “women’s chest pain is not taken as seriously as men’s.”

What is cardiovascular disease?

Cardiovascular disease includes diseases of the heart and blood vessels. Atherosclerosis is an underlying cause of cardiovascular disease that develops over time. It occurs when arteries that supply the heart or brain with blood slowly develop deposits of cells, fat, and cholesterol. This buildup is called plaque. If a plaque burst or ruptures, a blood clot is formed, potentially leading to a heart attack or stroke.

A national study was conducted in 1997 to assess women’s awareness of their risk of coronary disease. The study concluded that of the 1,000 women, only 30 percent of women were aware that heart disease is the leading cause of death among women. Today that number has increased to 55 percent.

Better lifestyle habits can help reduce the risk of heart attack. Learn what you can do to help prevent heart disease and stroke.

Healthy Lifestyle Tips

- Better eating habits help reduce your risk for heart attack.
- Choose the right foods to eat, and prepare foods in a healthy way.
- Remain active through exercise and fitness (swimming, cycling, jogging, walking, etc.).
- Weight management can reduce heart attacks.
- Lowering cholesterol helps reduce heart attacks and strokes.

Food Limitations

Limit foods that are high in fat. Such foods deposit fat in the blood. Some examples are:

- Fatty cuts of meat
- Eggs
- Non-dairy coffee creamer
- Fried foods
- Ice cream, cream, butter, whole milk, and cheese

For more information, facts, and tips, please visit the following websites:

- www.americanheart.org
- www.womenshealth.gov
- www.nhlbi.nih.gov