

Women and Heart Disease

Coronary heart disease is a disease of the heart's blood vessels that, if untreated, can cause heart attacks. Like any muscle, the heart needs a constant supply of oxygen and nutrients, which are carried to it by the blood in the coronary arteries. When the coronary arteries become narrowed or clogged and cannot supply enough blood to the heart, CHD results.

- Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of American women.
- Every year, more than 500,000 American women die of cardiovascular disease.
- 8 million American women are living with heart disease.
- In the United States, cardiovascular disease claims the lives of more women every year than the next 16 causes of death combined - and almost twice as many as all forms of cancer.
- One in three women will die from heart disease, while one in 25 women dies from breast cancer.
- 63 percent of the women who suddenly die from heart disease have no history of the disease.
- Smoking is the most prevalent and preventable risk factor for cardiovascular disease in women younger than 45.
- African-American women are more likely to die of coronary heart disease, stroke and heart attacks than Caucasian women.
- Women who smoke are two to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than nonsmoking women, and the risk increases with the number of cigarettes smoked per day.
- Smokers who have a heart attack are more likely to die and die suddenly (within an hour) than nonsmokers.
- Even slightly elevated blood pressure can double your risk for coronary heart disease.
- More than half of women older than 55 have high blood pressure. High blood pressure is more common and more severe in African-American women.
- Overweight women have an increased risk of developing heart-related problems. Obesity is linked with coronary heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure and death from heart-related causes.
- Women with a waist circumference of 35 inches or more are more likely to develop heart disease.

The following Web sites provided this information:

www.americanheart.org • www.whitehouse.gov/firstlady/initiatives/womenandheartdisease4.html
www.healthywomen.org/healthtopics/heartdisease/factstoknow