



1 in 4 Women Will Die of Heart Disease



What is Heart Disease?

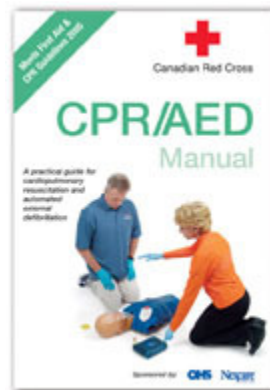
When you hear the term "heart disease," you may think, "That's a man's disease" or "Not my problem." But here is *The Heart Truth*[®]: one in four women in the United States dies of heart disease, while one in 30 dies of breast

cancer. If you've got a heart, heart disease could be your problem.

What Are the Risk Factors for Heart Disease?

An astonishing 80 percent of women ages 40 to 60 have one or more risk factor for heart disease. Having one or more risk factors dramatically increases a woman's chance of developing heart disease because risk factors tend to worsen each other's effects. In fact, according to research compiled by the NHLBI, having just one risk factor doubles your chance of developing heart disease.

Whatever a woman's age, she needs to take action to protect her heart health. Heart disease can begin early, even in the teen years, and women in their 20s and 30s need to take action to reduce their risk of developing heart disease. Yet among U.S. women ages 18 and older, 17.3 percent are current smokers, 51.6 are overweight (BMI 25 or greater), 27 percent have hypertension, 35 percent have high cholesterol, and 53 percent do not meet physical activity recommendations. African American and Hispanic women, in particular, have higher rates of some risk factors for heart disease and are disproportionately affected by the disease compared to white women. More than 80 percent of midlife African American women are overweight or obese, 52 percent have hypertension, and 14 percent have been diagnosed with diabetes. Some 83 percent



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of midlife Hispanic women are overweight or obese, and more than 10 percent have been diagnosed with diabetes

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Know The Signs

Common heart attack symptoms include:

- **Pressure, a feeling of fullness or a squeezing pain in the center of your chest that lasts for more than a few minutes**
- **Pain extending beyond your chest to your shoulder, arm, back, or even to your teeth and jaw**
- **Increasing episodes of chest pain**
- **Prolonged pain in the upper abdomen**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Sweating**
- **Impending sense of doom**
- **Fainting**
- **Nausea and vomiting**

Additional, or different, heart attack symptoms in women may include:

- **Abdominal pain or heartburn**
- **Clammy skin**
- **Lightheadedness or dizziness**
- **Unusual or unexplained fatigue**

Heart attack symptoms vary

Not all people who have heart attacks experience the same symptoms or experience them to the same degree. Many heart attacks aren't as dramatic as the ones you've seen on TV. Some people have no symptoms at all. Still, the more signs and symptoms you have, the greater the likelihood that you may be having a heart attack.

A heart attack can occur anytime - at work or play, while you're resting, or while you're in motion. Some heart attacks strike suddenly, but many people who experience a heart attack have warning signs and symptoms hours, days or weeks in advance. The earliest warning of a heart attack may be recurrent chest pain (angina) that's triggered by exertion and relieved by rest. Angina is caused by a temporary decrease in blood flow to the heart.

Many people confuse a heart attack with a condition in which your heart suddenly stops (sudden cardiac arrest). A heart attack is different from sudden cardiac arrest, which occurs when an electrical disturbance in your

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Success Stories

I had a heart attack three days after giving birth to my third child. I was 37 and in good cholesterol had always been good. I exercised and ate well. Everyone was in shock I was told that I suffered from a dissection of my artery, most likely caused from the stress of the labor. Now I'm on medication that keeps my bp low. So low that I get lightheaded and short of breath all the time. It's very frustrating and scary. I have three children (10 and my youngest is 1), and I just worry that won't be around to see them grow up age 38

"I WAS 49 WHEN I HAD MY FIRST HEART ATTACK. I WAS THIN HEALTHY, EXERCISED WELL - ALWAYS TOOK CARE OF MYSELF. AFTER ROLLERBLADING WITH MY FRIEND I EXPERIENCED CHEST PAIN RADIATING DOWN MY LEFT ARM. THINKING THIS WAS THIS COULD NOT BE A HEART ATTACK, I WENT IN THE HOUSE AND RESTED. THE PAIN WENT AWAY. IT NEVER DID - SO A FRIEND OF MINE TOOK ME TO HOSPITAL AND SURE ENOUGH I HAD SUFFERED A HEART ATTACK. I WAS THE HEALTHIEST ONE IN MY FAMILY, ALWAYS TOOK CARE OF MYSELF. MY CHOLESTEROL WAS WELL WITHIN THE NORMAL LIMITS. I LATER REALIZED THAT I PROBABLY INHERITED MY DAD'S GENES FOR HEART DISEASE. HE HAD BYPASS IN HIS HEART. I WAS ALL I NEEDED !! BAD GENES" - Anne Waldman, age 53

"I am now 50 years old and in the past 18 months have been in the hospital 16 times for heart problems. I have had a heart attack, several smaller attacks, open-heart surgery, angioplasty, catheters, and several stents. When I had my first heart attack, I waited two hours in the ER before the people with foot problems went ahead of me. The reason for that is the triage nurse I was not having a heart attack but that it was only esophagus problems. Had I been a male with chest pains, I would have gotten immediate attention. This is a real problem for a group of women like me who have been through this and been discriminated against because of their gender? I am looking for a support group and also want to be a voice crying in the wilderness" to change the perception that heart disease is for men only." - B

"When I first went to my new doctor, I thought I had a virus. I was breathless after sex, chest pains, was tired and dizzy all the time, and my heart was racing. Thankfully, I had a stress echo test and I was diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy. I am so grateful for a doctor. Earlier in the year when I complained of these symptoms, my former doctor with chronic bronchitis, put me on antibiotics and told me to go home and get some rest. I wanted to tell anyone reading this if you feel unusual symptoms, go to a doctor and get tested. I am only 31 years old and heart disease was the last thing on my mind." - N

"I went to my doctor with chest pains and swelling in my legs. She didn't listen to me and told me it was stress-related. When I finally went to the ER, I'd had a heart attack. They did a TPA that only caused bleeding in my pericardium. My ejection fraction was down to 10% and I went into cardiac arrest three times but, incredibly, I pulled through." - Tessa

"Five days after my C-section, I woke up at night with chest pain, coughing, and trouble breathing. It got so bad that I couldn't even hold my new born to my chest to breastfeed. I was in the ER and was continually dismissed as having "baby blues." After much persistence, a nurse checked my blood pressure and pulse. I was put on oxygen immediately and called. An EKG and X-ray later, I was told I had postpartum cardiomyopathy, and I was dying within the next few days, and that most women with my condition don't live for more than a few months. Well, a year later I'm still here and almost back to normal. My two main reasons for stopping breastfeeding and losing the decision to have more children. But something about this too - I was forced to slow down. Work is no longer important, my family is. I put my children first now, the dishes can wait." - Naomi

heart disrupts its pumping action and causes blood to stop flowing to the rest of your body.

Click <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/heart-attack/DS00094/DSECTION=symptoms> for the Full Article and More Heart Health Information



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Women's Heart Health 101

The face of heart disease is changing.

Many women think of cardiovascular disease as a "man's disease." But that's simply not true. In fact, women are more likely than men to die of a heart attack or stroke.

In Canada, stroke kills 45 per cent more women than men. And women are 16 per cent more likely than men to die after a heart attack.

There are a number of factors that may account for the increase in women's risks of heart attack and stroke: women are less likely to recognize the symptoms of these diseases and seek treatment quickly; men and women are often treated differently by the health system, with men receiving more prompt and proactive treatment; and women have a number of unique risks, such as pregnancy and menopause.

In fact, most Canadian women have at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke. As they age, estrogen levels, which offer them a degree of protection against heart disease and stroke when they are younger, begin to decline.

But there are many other factors that can affect your heart health, no matter what your age. It's important to understand and manage your unique risks to improve your health and reduce your risk

"I had a severe angina attack and had to call 911. When I got to the hospital, the doc awful. One doctor told me I was having an anxiety attack and I should go for therapy. The second doctor diagnosed my angina and admitted me. The woman in the bed next to me had high blood pressure, was getting bad headaches and fainted. She was also told she had guess anxiety is the new illness." - Debbie

"I am a 38 year old nurse who has had periodic palpitations, dizziness, a near black abnormal EKGs. The first doctor diagnosed sinus tachycardia, told me I wasn't going to be handed me some Tenormin samples and a prescription, and sent me home with no scheduled. Another doctor just told me to lose weight, cut down on drinking coffee and reduce stress in my life. I am scared that, because I am so young, my symptoms and risk factors are not being taken seriously." - Kim

"I called 911 when I had severe heartburn and back pain, sweating and short of breath. The doctor discharged me, but said to stop and buy a bottle of Mylanta on my way home. 7 days later my mother found me on the floor, nearly unconscious and having a full-blown heart attack. I'm still alive." - Susan

"On my first visit to a cardiologist, he came into the exam room and asked me why I had a heart attack. I told him that a prior EKG showed a possible heart attack and that my younger sister had a heart attack at 42. He replied, "Well, we all have to die of something, don't we?" Next time I saw him he's my former cardiologist." - Helen

"I had a quadruple bypass a year ago. Four months later I was in pain so I returned to the ER where I was treated as a hysterical woman, told I had gastric reflux and discharged. Later I again returned to the ER where it was found that three of my four grafts had failed. At some point, that I had had another heart attack. When I think of how arrogantly they treated me and the poor level of care I received, I am angry and despondent" - Madeline

"A young woman in my town had been complaining to her doctor of chest pains, but repeatedly, over many months, she had acid reflux. Last month, after another doctor told her to go home, she had a massive heart attack and went into a coma. Last week she was pulled off and she died at age 42. We women are being misdiagnosed to death." - Nancy

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of disease.

Often, your body will send out warning signs of a heart attack or stroke. By being aware of these warning signs and acting on them quickly, you can make sure you receive prompt treatment that could save your life or minimize the damage to your health.

There is good news for women and heart health. There are many things you can do to reduce your risk and heart disease and stroke, and in some cases-for instance in some of the new stroke treatments-female patients benefit even more than male patients do.

The bottom line is that awareness-of your risks, of the warning signs, and of prevention and treatment options-is your best defense against heart disease and stroke.

Click http://www.thehearttruth.ca/canadian_women_and_h for the Full Article

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