

## Heart Health

**Every minute, one woman dies nationwide because of heart disease.** February is heart health month. So I wanted to talk about the leading killer of women in the United States: Heart Disease! We women just don't put the same effort into caring for ourselves, as we put into caring for our families. Women are nurturers. We come last on the list. Let's learn together about heart disease in women and how to lower our risk.

**Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women.** Cardiovascular diseases cause one in three women's deaths each year, killing approximately one woman every minute. An estimated **43 million women** in the US are affected by cardiovascular disease. Heart disease kills more women than all forms of cancer combined, but is often undiagnosed. 1 in 30 women die from breast cancer each year. **1 in 3 dies of cardiovascular disease.** Only 1 in 5 women believe that heart disease is their greatest health threat. Women are less likely to call 9-1-1 for themselves when experiencing symptoms of a heart attack than they are for someone else having a heart attack.

Since 1984, more women than men have died each year from heart disease and stroke and the gap between men and women's survival continues to widen. The symptoms of heart disease can be different in women versus men and are often misunderstood – even by some physicians.

Sweating, pressure, nausea and jaw pain. Believe it or not, these are all symptoms for a heart attack in women. Also, women are likely to describe chest pain that is sharp and burning and more often have pain in the neck, jaw, throat, abdomen or back. These are all symptoms that women brush off as flu, stress or simply feeling under the weather.

Do you have any of these risk factors? **90% of women have one or more risk factors for developing heart disease.** Diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure are risk factors for heart disease. Smoking, poor diet, obesity, excess alcohol, and being physically inactive are also risk factors for heart disease. Heredity can also be a risk factor because heart disease can run in families.

We need to know our risk factors, make healthy choices, and lower our chances for having a heart attack or stroke. We need to see our health care provider for a checkup, especially if you have any risk factors or symptoms. If you experience any of these signs or symptoms: Do not wait to call for help. **Dial 9-1-1.** If you seek help quickly, treatment can save your life and prevent permanent damage to your heart muscle. Treatment works best if given within one hour of when symptoms begin.

Ladies... It's time for us to take care of ourselves, and if we won't do it for ourselves, let's do it for our families: our husbands, our children, our sisters, our mothers, or our best friends. I am making my checkup appointment. How about you? ■