



May 12, 2003
National Women's Check-Up Day

More Information About *Cardiovascular Disease*

Heart attacks and strokes, while different conditions, both are caused by a lack of blood flow. A heart attack, caused by coronary heart disease, occurs when blood flow to the heart is critically reduced. Lack of blood flow to the brain from a blood clot, or bleeding in the brain from a broken blood vessel, causes a stroke. Sometimes called a "mini stroke," a person can also have a transient ischemic attack (TIA), which raises the risk for a full stroke.

- ❖ Heart disease is the number one killer of American women. More women die of heart disease each year than men.
- ❖ Almost twice as many women die from cardiovascular disease (mostly heart attacks and strokes) than from all forms of cancer combined.

Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease

- ❖ Cardiovascular disease affects women of all racial and ethnic groups, however, African American women are more likely to die from heart disease than other groups of women. Smoking, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, inactivity, increasing age, family history of heart disease, obesity and diabetes are risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Reducing Your Risk

There are several steps you can take to reduce your risk for cardiovascular disease:

- Don't smoke or quit if you do.
- Keep your blood pressure below 140/90 mm Hg; below 130/85 mm Hg for people with kidney damage or heart failure; or below 130/80 mm Hg for people with diabetes. Ask your health care provider about how often you need your blood pressure checked.
- Eat healthy.
- Lower your cholesterol to the right level, based on your personal risk.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Ask your health care provider what a healthy weight is for you.
- Have a normal fasting blood glucose level (below 110 mg/dL). Ask your health care provider when you should be tested. If you have diabetes, monitor and control your blood sugar levels.
- Talk with your health care provider about your heart disease risks and your family's heart disease history.





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What to Watch Out For

- ❖ Signs of Heart Attack
 - Chest discomfort or uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain in center of chest that lasts longer than a few minutes, or comes and goes.
 - Spreading pain to one or both arms, back, jaw, or stomach.
 - Cold sweats and nausea.

- ❖ As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to have some of the other warning signs, particularly shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting and back or jaw pain.

- ❖ Signs of a Stroke
 - Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
 - Sudden confusion, or trouble speaking or understanding speech.
 - Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
 - Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination.
 - Sudden severe headache with no known cause.
 - Blurred or double vision, drowsiness, and nausea or vomiting.

- ❖ Similar to a heart attack, not everyone gets all of these warning signs. Sometimes, these signs can go away and return. Every minute counts, even if the symptoms seem to disappear. Treatments are most effective if given within one hour of when the stroke begins. If you have these signs, call 911 right away!

