

# HEART DISEASE & STROKE

## LIFE-SAVING LEARNING FOR WOMEN



**Heart disease** and **stroke** are two major health concerns for women – killing more women each year than all types of cancer combined. And because **cardiovascular diseases** (those that affect the heart and blood vessels) do not have obvious warning signs, knowing their causes and focusing on prevention can make all the difference in protecting yourself.

### Risk factors for heart disease and stroke:

- Atherosclerosis: buildup of plaque (fat, cholesterol and other substances) in your blood vessels that can cause reduced or blocked blood flow
- Uncontrollable: age, gender, genetics/family history, race (African American/Black and Hispanic)
- Controllable: being overweight/obese, unmanaged high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, inactivity, unhealthy diet, smoking, stress

*\* To fully understand your risk, it's important to "know your numbers" (BMI, waist circumference, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar):*  
[cccalculator.ccctracker.com/](http://cccalculator.ccctracker.com/)

### Establishing healthy habits:

According to the American Heart Association, 80% of cardiovascular disease can be prevented by addressing controllable risk factors:

**Get active.** Do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (something that gets your heart and breathing rates up) five days/week.

**Eat well.** Focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats (oils). Limit full-dairy, solid fats (butter, margarine), sodium (salt), sweets and overly processed foods. The DASH and Mediterranean diets are good examples to follow. Alcohol in moderation. There is no strong evidence that alcohol actually protects your heart.

**Manage stress.** Learn to step away from stressors every now and then. Physical activity, mindfulness, and getting enough sleep can help you cope with stress in healthy ways. If you smoke, cut down or quit.

### Responding in an emergency:

The majority of cardiovascular problems can be prevented, but not all. Knowing what to do in an emergency, such as heart attack or stroke, can also be life-saving:

### Recognize the symptoms.

- *Heart attack (especially in women):* pain, pressure or fullness in the chest or pain in the jaw, arms, or upper back, shortness of breath, fatigue, lightheadedness, indigestion/nausea
- *Stroke:* sudden loss of balance/coordination, change in vision, weakness on one side of face (or facial droop), slurred speech, trouble speaking or understanding speech, terrible headache

**Call 9-1-1 immediately.** The faster someone gets medical attention, the better the chances are of reducing permanent damage or death.

**If someone's heart has stopped, perform CPR.** Learn hands-only CPR at the American Heart Association.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

American Heart Association: [heart.org](http://heart.org)

American Stroke Association: [stroke.org](http://stroke.org)

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: [thehearttruth.org](http://thehearttruth.org)



Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation  
608-251-1675 x 118 | [wwhf.org](http://wwhf.org)