

Heart Disease And Women: Are You At Risk?

(NAPSA)—A little knowledge may help many women fight back against deadly diseases. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for American women. Stroke is the third leading cause of death. Yet, if you're like most women, you are unaware of these alarming statistics.

Misconceptions still exist that heart disease is not a real problem for women. Even when educated on their risks, only eight percent of women consider heart disease their greatest threat. In fact, one in eight women 45 to 64 years of age has some form of heart disease, and this increases to one in three women over 65.

"Heart disease is a woman's concern. One in three women will die from heart disease," said Rite Aid pharmacist Laura Shaw, R.Ph. "Certain factors increase the risk of developing heart disease. Fortunately, these factors can be controlled. Nothing is more important in the battle against heart disease than knowing what can be done and taking action."

Risk Factors You Can Change

Major controllable risk factors include:

- **Smoking:** Research indicates that a smoker's risk of heart attack is more than twice that of nonsmokers.

- **High cholesterol:** As cholesterol levels rise, the risk of heart disease increases. Cholesterol levels are affected by age, sex, heredity and diet. Today, about a quarter of all American women have blood cholesterol levels high enough to pose a risk.

- **High blood pressure:** High blood pressure increases the workload of the heart, causing it to weaken over time. It also increases the risk of stroke, heart attack, kidney failure and congestive heart failure.



- **Physical inactivity:** As little as 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week helps protect heart health.

- **Diabetes:** The risk of death from heart disease is about three times higher in women with diabetes.

- **Obesity:** Overweight women are much more likely to develop heart-related problems. Excess weight increases the strain on the heart and influences blood pressure, blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels, making diabetes more likely to develop.

Drug treatment for heart disease varies widely. According to Shaw, Rite Aid Pharmacists are specially trained to work closely with a patient's doctor to provide a thorough review of treatment options and address any questions a patient may have about medications and possible side effects.

"Take charge of your health. Make it a point to ask your doctor about the risks you face as a woman and the preventive measures you should take," said Shaw. "Leading a heart healthy life means adopting a healthy lifestyle."

For more information or to find a Rite Aid pharmacist, visit www.riteaid.com.