



Women's Health Alert

Heart Disease Strikes Women More Than Men, Studies Show

(NAPSA)—Hospitals across the nation are working together to educate women that heart disease is their number one health risk.

More than 500,000 women will die this year in the United States from what many still consider a “man’s disease,” and countless others will needlessly overlook the greatest health threat facing American families today.

The culprit: heart disease.

Heart disease is the number one killer of American women, striking more women than the next 16 causes of death, combined. Unfortunately, studies show that most women—and even many healthcare practitioners—still associate heart disease so closely with men that the risk to women is often overlooked.

A nationwide public-education campaign, “Women’s HeartAdvantage,” is being launched through key hospitals across the United States, coordinated by VHA Inc, a national cooperative of more than 2,200 not-for-profit health care organizations across the United States. The goal is to better educate women and health care professionals on the risks of heart disease, especially the particular symptoms of a heart attack in women that are not commonly experienced by men.

“It’s important that we understand that heart attacks are a very real risk to women today, and that a woman’s symptoms are often very different from those of a man,” says Dr. Noel Bairey Merz, a cardiologist with Cedars-Sinai Health System in Los Angeles, one of the institutions participating in the Women’s HeartAdvantage campaign.

For example, in addition to the common symptoms of chest pain and shortness of breath, women may also experience indigestion, nausea and pain in the back,

Recognizing the symptoms of a heart attack:

Classic symptoms

- Squeezing chest pain or pressure, tightness in chest or recurring chest discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Pain spreading to shoulders, neck or arms

More likely in women

- Indigestion or gas-like pain
- Dizziness, nausea or vomiting
- Unexplained weakness, fatigue
- Discomfort or pain between the shoulder blades
- Sense of impending doom

Source: American Heart Association



between the shoulder blades.

“Women need to talk with their doctor at every opportunity about heart disease and its warning signs,” says Dr. Caron Houston, an internist from Baylor Health Care System in Dallas.

“Trust your instincts and be assertive, even if your symptoms may be vague.”

Doctors emphasize that a thorough assessment—including total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, triglyceride and glucose levels—is important in catching potential problems early.

“The good news is that many women are reducing their risk of heart disease through exercise and healthier eating habits,” says Dr. Teresa Caulin-Glaser, a cardiologist at Yale-New Haven Hospital in Connecticut. “Yet all women need to better understand the risk of heart disease in their family, and how to take better care of themselves.”

For more information about heart disease in women, and links to health care facilities participating in the education campaign, go to www.womensheartadvantage.org or call toll-free 866-USA-4-WHA.