

Total Nutrition

The Biggest Threat To Women's Health: Heart Disease

(NAPS)—February marks Heart Health Month. So, how's your heart health?

If you're a woman or have one you care about in your life, find out. Heart disease affects as many women as it does men and claims twice the number of lives as all cancers combined, including breast cancer.

The risk factors for heart disease are the same for both men and women, and include smoking, physical inactivity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and obesity. Women also have some unique risk factors, however, including menopause and estrogen loss, the use of birth control pills (especially for those who smoke or have high blood pressure) and a high level of triglycerides.

To improve one's heart health it is important to recognize the hurdles affecting medical care and the proven preventive steps that can change the incidence for women.

The hurdles

Lack of research: Many of the major studies on heart disease have been done on men, resulting in less information on the incidence, treatment and prevention of heart disease in women. Fortunately that trend is changing. More and more research is being done specifically to help women.

Misinterpreting a problem: Men, women and even some physicians do not pay enough attention to symptoms of heart disease among women, especially in women younger than age 65. Because of that, chest pain and other symptoms have been dismissed or attributed to different medical conditions. As a result, women may miss out on the benefits of early testing and treatment.

Different symptoms: Twenty percent of women suffering a heart attack do not experience the classic symptom of crushing chest pain. Instead they often have

atypical symptoms such as nausea, unexplained fatigue, difficulty breathing and abdominal pain.

(See Table)

An ounce of prevention...

Is worth a pound of cure. A recent report from a 14-year study of more than 85,000 women found that healthful changes made to diet and lifestyle over the years had a significant impact on heart health.

- A reduction in smoking cut heart disease within the group by 13 percent.
- Overall improvements in diet caused a 16 percent decline in heart disease.
- The use of hormone replacement therapy in menopause reduced risk by nine percent.

Other reports confirm that physical activity is essential for a healthy heart. Three hours of brisk walking a week or half that time spent jogging, doing aerobics or another more vigorous exercise can reduce a woman's risk by 35 to 40 percent. Plus, regular physical activity reduces weight gains that often occur with aging.

A Great Start Toward Total Nutrition—Specific diet changes such as consuming more whole-grain foods can do wonders for heart health. For example, in the study mentioned above, women who ate 2.5 servings of whole grain foods experienced a 30 percent lower risk of coronary heart disease than women who ate little or no whole-grain foods. Eating whole-grain cereal at breakfast is a great way to get some of the recommended three daily servings of whole grains.

Brought to you by Total cereals, breakfast cereals with 100% of the Daily Value of at least 11 vitamins and minerals.

Learn the warning signs of a heart attack:

Classic Symptoms	Other Symptoms
Uncomfortable pressure, fullness or squeezing pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes.	Abnormal chest, stomach or abdominal pain.
Pain spreading to the shoulders, arms or neck.	Unexplained anxiety, weakness or fatigue.
Chest discomfort along with lightheadedness, fainting, sweating, nausea or shortness of breath.	Unexplained heartburn, nausea and dizziness.
	Palpitations, cold sweat, paleness. TM

Note to Editors: This is Series III—14 of 26.