

## Help Your Heart

Start today to make heart smart changes in your life. By adopting heart healthy habits you can lower your risk of heart disease significantly!



**1. Commit to a heart healthy diet.** Eat a diet that is full of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Foods low in saturated and trans fat, cholesterol and salt can help prevent heart disease.



**2. Step it up.** Regular physical activity improves heart function and helps lower your risk of developing heart disease. Try to get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day—garden, swim or go for a brisk walk.



**3. Watch your weight.** Excess body fat forces your heart to work harder and increases your risk for heart disease, even if you don't have any other risk factors. Shedding even a small amount of weight can make a big difference.



**4. Quit smoking or don't start.** Smoking can damage your heart and blood vessels and increase your chance of developing blood clots and high blood pressure. Quitting dramatically cuts the risk to your heart, even within the first year.



**5. Know your numbers.** Get your blood pressure, blood sugar (glucose), cholesterol and triglyceride levels checked regularly. Controlling elevated numbers is critical to preventing heart disease and identifying problems early.



**6. Manage stress.** Learn to recognize signs of stress in your life and practice reducing them with meditation, yoga or deep breathing. Regular exercise is also a great way to relieve stress.

**7. Join WomenHeart and take charge of your heart health. Log on to [www.womenheart.org](http://www.womenheart.org) today!**

**Prevention.**

**Early detection.**

**Accurate diagnosis.**

**Proper treatment.**

As the leading voice for 42 million American women living with or at risk of heart disease, WomenHeart is the only national, patient-centered organization dedicated to promoting women's heart health through advocacy, community education and patient support. A nonprofit, 501(c)(3) patient advocacy organization, WomenHeart is a community of women heart patients and their families, health care providers, advocates and consumers committed to helping women live longer, healthier lives.



1100 17th Street, NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20036  
PHONE: 202-728-7199

For more information or to join us, visit

**[www.womenheart.org](http://www.womenheart.org)**

© 2015 WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease



**Get Smart  
About Your Heart**

**[www.womenheart.org](http://www.womenheart.org)**



# WomenHeart

The National  
Coalition for Women  
with Heart Disease

## Know Your Heart

Heart disease is the leading killer of women in America—one out of every four women will die because of it each year. Heart disease, alone, will claim the lives of more than 150,000 women—more than will die of breast cancer and lung cancer combined.

Heart disease is a serious threat to women's health but you can lower your risk if you are smart about your heart. **WomenHeart** is here to help you. As the only national organization solely devoted to advancing women's heart health through advocacy, community education and patient support, we are your resource for heart disease information, support and answers.

## Heart Disease 101

Heart disease includes different conditions of the heart and blood vessels. Some forms are congenital, or present at birth. Other forms may develop slowly over time and are often preventable.

Coronary artery disease is the most common type of heart disease and the leading cause of heart attack. It begins when plaque (cells, cholesterol and fat) build up inside the walls of blood vessels, causing them to narrow in a process called atherosclerosis. This narrowing eventually restricts or stops blood flow to the heart or brain, leading to heart attack or stroke. While both men and women suffer with heart attack, women are less likely than men to survive and are more likely to have a second heart attack.

The signs and symptoms of heart disease in women can be subtle—nearly two-thirds of American women who die suddenly of heart attack had no prior symptoms. Too often heart disease in women is misdiagnosed or undertreated, leading to fewer opportunities to manage or prevent it. With **WomenHeart** information and support, you can take charge of your heart and start today to lower your risk of heart disease.

## Know Your Risks

While increased age, race and family history can increase your risk of heart disease, so can lifestyle choices or other physical conditions including:

- High blood pressure, or hypertension
- High LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, high triglycerides, and/or low HDL or “good” cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Tobacco smoke
- Being physically inactive
- Being overweight or obese

African American, Hispanic and Native American women are all at greater risk of heart disease than white women and are also more likely to have contributing risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels and obesity.



Have a heart-to-heart talk with your health care provider and ask these questions to find out how you can lower your risk for heart disease.

- What is my overall risk of heart disease?
- What lifestyle changes can I start making to improve my heart health?
- What tests should I have to monitor my risk for developing heart disease or other cardiovascular diseases? How often do I need these screenings?
- What are my blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels? What do these test results mean?
- How much exercise do I need to help protect my heart?
- Should I take aspirin to help prevent a heart attack? If so, how much and how often?
- Am I at high-risk for heart-related complications if I take birth control pills?
- I've heard the warning signs of a heart attack can be different in a women. What should I look for?

Connect with the women of WomenHeart. Go to [www.womenheart.org](http://www.womenheart.org) and find out how you can be part of this national coalition and community of women heart patients and their families, physicians, health care providers and health advocates committed to helping women live longer, healthier lives.