

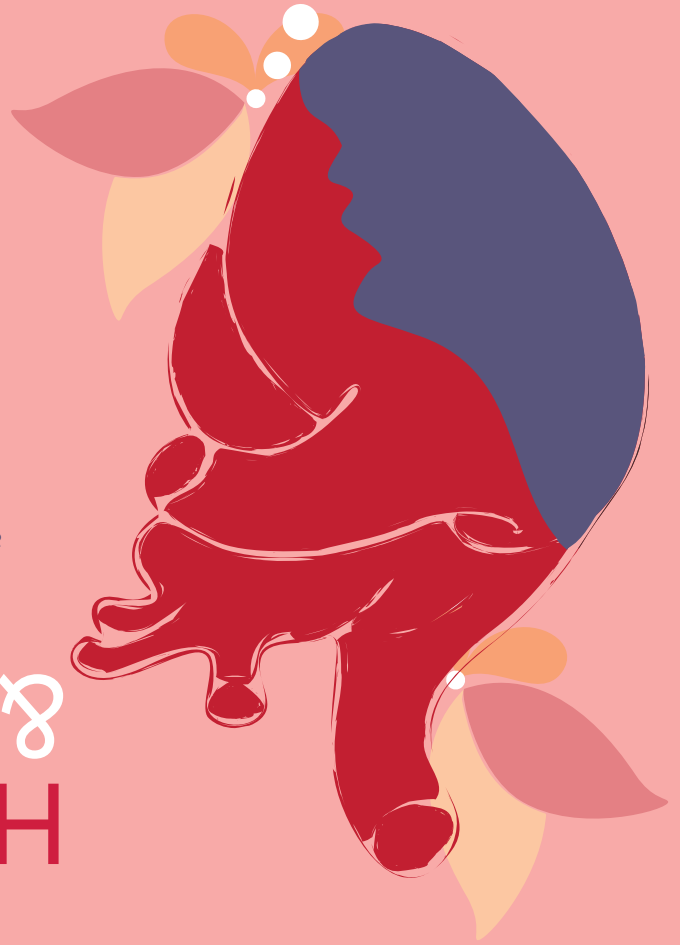
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WOMENHEART



Heart disease is a major health concern for women, affecting over 60 million in the U.S. Though often thought of as a man's disease, it is the leading cause of death for women. Women usually get heart disease about 10 years later than men, yet more women die from it. They also receive different treatment than men, which can lead to worse outcomes, like higher death rates and longer hospital stays. It is important for women to recognize the risk factors and advocate for their own heart health.

# HEART DISEASE & RISK FACTORS



WOMENHEART

THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR  
WOMEN WITH HEART DISEASE



P 202.728.7199 | [womenheart.org](http://womenheart.org)

**WOMENHEART:** The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease is the nation's first and still only patient centered organization serving millions of American women living with or at risk for heart disease — the leading cause of death in women. WomenHeart is solely devoted to advancing women's heart health through advocacy, community education, and the nation's only patient support network for women living with heart disease. WomenHeart is both a coalition and a community of thousands of members nationwide, including women heart patients and their families, physicians, and health advocates, all committed to helping women live longer, healthier lives. To learn more or to donate visit [womenheart.org](http://womenheart.org).

# HEART DISEASE & RISK FACTORS

Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) is when your arteries get clogged with plaque, a waxy substance that blocks blood flow to the heart. CAD is the leading cause of death for women. However, women can also get other common heart conditions, like arrhythmias (irregular heartbeat), heart failure (when the heart isn't working well), and microvascular disease (disease of the small blood vessels).



It's important to know the risks of heart disease in women. Common risk factors include:

- High blood pressure
- High Cholesterol, especially LDL
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Family history of heart disease



**1 in 5 women die from heart disease.**

Some of these common risk factors affect women more negatively than men.



- **Women who smoke** show a **25% higher risk** of developing Coronary Heart Disease than men with the same exposure to tobacco smoke.
- **Women with type 2 diabetes** have a **44% greater risk** of Coronary Heart Disease than men with the same condition.

There are also certain sex-specific risk factors that put women at higher risk of heart disease and should be considered. These include:

## 1 Pregnancy-related conditions:

Some conditions during pregnancy may increase the risk of future heart disease. These include:

- Gestational diabetes
- Pre-eclampsia
- Gestational hypertension or eclampsia
- Pre-term delivery



## 2 Autoimmune conditions:

Systemic autoimmune conditions, which more commonly affect women, increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease. These conditions include:

- Lupus erythematosus (SLE)
- Rheumatoid arthritis

## 3 Hormonal influences:

Certain hormone-related conditions can increase the risk of heart disease in women. These include:

- Getting a period before age 11
- Starting menopause early
- Hormone-based birth control for those with high blood pressure or a history of blood clots
- Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

## RECOGNIZING SYMPTOMS

Knowing your body and paying attention to any symptoms can help you stay prepared. Symptoms of heart disease in women can include:

- Chest pain or discomfort such as tightness or pressure
- Pain or discomfort in the shoulders, arms, neck, or jaw
- Pain in the upper abdomen or back
- Nausea or indigestion
- Tiredness that feels abnormal
- Unexplained shortness of breath



Prepare to talk with your health care team. The best way to get diagnosed early and get proper treatment is to:



**Know Your Risks:** Learn about factors that can increase your risk of heart disease and discuss these with your doctor.

**Ask About Your Options:** Health care providers have many tools and test to diagnose heart disease. Talk to your provider about these options.

**Advocate for Yourself:** Go to appointments with a list of questions or concerns. Don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion if needed.



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