

# WOMEN, DEPRESSION & HEART DISEASE

Depression is **twice** as common in women than in men.


Women who are depressed are more than

**2x**



as likely as women who are not depressed to experience **sudden cardiac death**.

Women suffering from depression are at risk of heart disease **2 - 3 times** more than women who are not depressed.

 The risk of developing depression increases in women with diabetes and women who don't exercise regularly. The same is true in women with a history of angina.

Depression makes it difficult for women to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

**Cardiovascular disease (CVD)**, often used interchangeably with heart disease, generally refers to conditions that involve narrowed or blocked blood vessels that can lead to a heart attack, chest pain or stroke. Other heart conditions, such as those that affect the heart's muscle, valves or rhythm, also are considered forms of heart disease.



Women with high levels of depression are likely to be obese or to smoke — major risk factors for heart disease.

CVD health care providers typically have a low awareness of mental health issues and may not accurately diagnose or treat depression in the majority of CVD patients.



Some signs and symptoms of depression include:

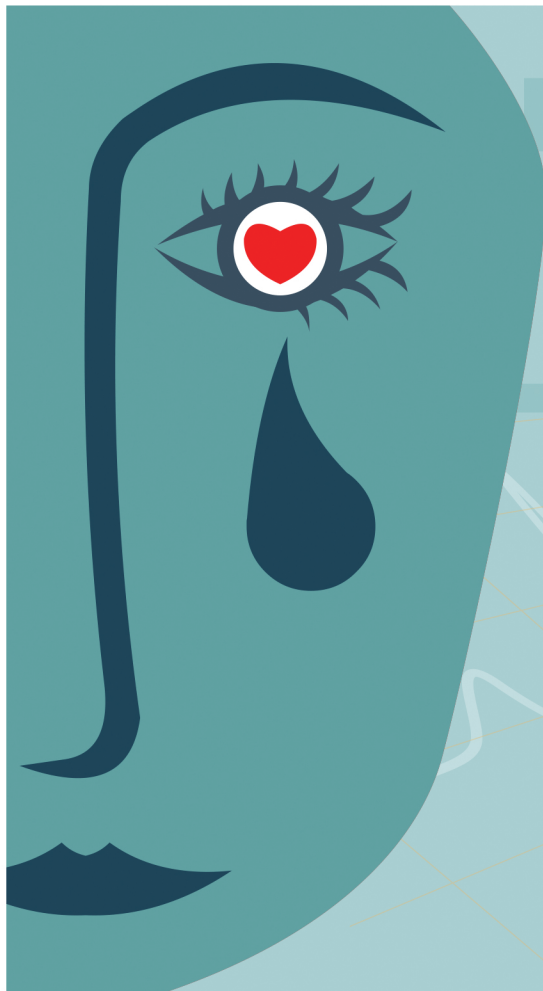
- Little interest or pleasure in doing things;
- Trouble falling or staying asleep/sleeping too much;
- Feeling down, depressed or hopeless;
- Feeling tired or having little energy;
- Poor appetite or overeating;
- Feeling bad about yourself;
- Trouble concentrating; and
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or that you would be better off dead.



Talk with your doctor if you experience more than two of the above symptoms.

[WWW.WOMENHEART.ORG](http://WWW.WOMENHEART.ORG)





# WOMEN, DEPRESSION & HEART DISEASE

The exact relationship between cardiovascular disease (CVD) and depression is not clear, but even mild forms of depression or depressive symptoms increase the risk of heart disease in women by two to three times. Atypical depression symptoms and the many physical symptoms that accompany heart disease — along with the fact that cardiovascular health care providers typically have a low awareness of mental health issues — make depression difficult to diagnose in CVD patients.



1100 17th Street NW • Suite 500 • Washington, DC 20036  
P 202.728.7199 • F 202.728.7238 • [www.womenheart.org](http://www.womenheart.org)

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

**WOMENHEART:** The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease is the nation's first and still only patient centered organization serving the 42 million 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 receive a free online heart health action kit or to donate visit [www.womenheart.org](http://www.womenheart.org).

## SOURCES

American Diabetes Association. (n.d.). Living with diabetes: Depression. Retrieved from <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/treatment-and-care/women/depression.html>

Gravely-Witte, S., De Gucht, V., Heiser, W., Grace, S. L., & Van Elderen, T. (March 2007). The impact of angina and cardiac history on health-related quality of life and depression in coronary heart disease patients. *Chronic Illness Journal*, 3(1), 66-76.

Hayes, Sharonne N. (2009). Broken-hearted women: The complex relationship between depression and cardiovascular disease. *Mayo Clinic College of Medicine*.

Lucas, M., Mekary, R., Pan, A., Mirzaei, E., et al. (November 1, 2011). Relation between clinical depression risk and physical activity and time spent watching television in older women: A 10-year prospective follow-up study. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 174(9), 1017-27.

Mayo Clinic staff, et al. (2009). Heart disease in women: Understand symptoms and risk factors. *Mayo Clinic*. Retrieved from <http://www.MayoClinic.com/health/heart-disease/HB00040>

Mayo Clinic staff. (n.d.). Heart disease definition. *Mayo Clinic*. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-disease/basics/definition/con-20034056>

Munafò, M., & Araya, R. (2010). Cigarette smoking and depression: A question of causation. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 196, 425-426.

Simon, G. E., Ludman, E. J., Linde, J. A., Operskalski, B. H., Ichikawa, L., Rohde, P., Finch, E. A., & Jeffery, R. W. (2008). Association between obesity and depression in middle-aged women. *Journal of General Hospital Psychiatry*, 30(1), 32-9.

Whang, W., et al. (March 17, 2010). Depression and risk of sudden cardiac death and coronary heart disease in women: Results from the Nurses' Health Study. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.