

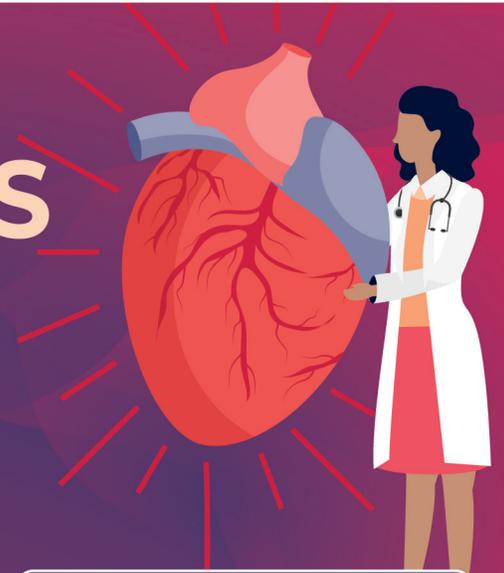
# MISSED, DELAYED, AND MISDIAGNOSIS

Women with heart disease often have their symptoms missed, diagnosed late, or diagnosed incorrectly. This leads to worse health outcomes, like higher death and rehospitalization rates compared to men. Some reasons for this include bias in healthcare, fewer women in clinical trials, and differences in the care they receive. For example, women may have the same heart attack symptoms as men, but their symptoms are more often ignored or misunderstood. Women are also less likely to get the right treatments or be referred to specialists. Solving these problems means raising awareness, improving access to care, supporting patient advocacy, and teaching doctors to better recognize and treat heart disease in women.



# MISSED, DELAYED, AND MISDIAGNOSIS

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women, yet it remains underdiagnosed, undertreated, and often mismanaged. Many women experience diagnostic and treatment delays or errors, leading to worse outcomes compared to men. Understanding these challenges and how you and your loved ones can face them is the first step toward ensuring women receive equitable and timely care.



What do missed, delayed, misdiagnosis, and mistreatment mean?

## MISSED DIAGNOSIS:

When heart disease is not diagnosed during an evaluation

## DELAYED DIAGNOSIS:

When heart disease is identified later than it should have been

## MISDIAGNOSIS:

When heart disease is incorrectly diagnosed as something else

## MISTREATMENT:

When the patient receives medical care that is inappropriate, inadequate, or not aligned with the patient's actual condition

Unfortunately, women with heart disease are often misdiagnosed or diagnosed late. This means they are diagnosed and treated later than men, leading to worse outcomes, such as higher death rates and more frequent hospital stays.

## BIAS IN HEALTHCARE

Bias in healthcare happens when assumptions or stereotypes affect how patients are treated, leading to unfair differences in care. For women with heart disease, this means their symptoms are not taken seriously, and they might not get the same level of treatment as men.

- Men and women often have chest pain during a heart attack, but both women and their doctors are less likely to link their symptoms to heart disease.
- Women have a 50% higher chance than men of receiving the wrong initial diagnosis after a heart attack.



## GAPS IN CARE AND INCLUSION

Women face significant challenges in the treatment of heart disease, often receiving less effective care and worse outcomes than men. These disparities are due to gaps in research, diagnosis, and treatment.

- Women are underrepresented in clinical cardiovascular trials, making it harder to understand how new treatments and devices might work differently for them.
- Only 22% of primary care providers and 42% of cardiologists reported being well prepared to assess cardiovascular disease risk in women.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

### Advocate for yourself

- Ask questions: If you feel something isn't right, ask your doctor about heart disease specifically.
- Be persistent: If you feel dismissed, seek a second opinion.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about whether your treatment is aligned with clinical guidelines.\*

\*Clinical guidelines are a set of expert recommendations that guide healthcare professionals in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of heart disease.

### Choose your healthcare team wisely

- Seek out providers who are experienced in treating women's heart health.
- Ask if your healthcare team is familiar with sex-specific guidelines for heart disease.



Women deserve to be listened to and believed. Advocate for equity in healthcare by supporting research, raising awareness, and getting involved in clinical trials when possible.



# WOMENHEART

THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR  
WOMEN WITH HEART DISEASE



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**WOMENHEART:** The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease is the nation's first and still only patient centered organization exclusively focused on 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](https://womenheart.org).

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