

UNDERSTANDING CLINICAL GUIDELINES

Clinical practice guidelines assist clinicians and patients in making decisions about appropriate health care. They summarize the current medical evidence available and provide specific recommendations considering this evidence. Clinical practice guidelines are created to:

- Promote high quality, consistent care
- Recommend treatment options with proven benefit and discourage those without
- Empower patients by engaging in shared decision-making opportunities with clinicians

Guidelines are regularly updated based on the latest research to promote the highest standard of care. Updates to guidelines may be made when:

- New treatments have been approved (medications or devices) with the potential to impact patient care
- New findings support a change to a previous recommendation



HOW ARE CLINICAL GUIDELINES CREATED?

Content Experts

- Committees are usually made up of experts in the relevant field. They generally involve a group of professionals from different backgrounds with a wide range of expertise, including physicians, researchers, nurses, pharmacists and nutrition experts.
- Individuals serve on these committees as unpaid volunteers. Any relationship with industry, including pharmaceuticals or devices, must be disclosed to ensure guidelines are not influenced by these relationships.

Systematic Review of Literature

- A systematic process is used to evaluate and classify the available evidence. Essentially, the current evidence is “graded” according to its strength and considered when making recommendations.
- After the committee drafts a guideline, it is often sent for a peer-review process, where additional experts in the field can suggest edits in the review process to improve or approve a recommendation. This vetting process is crucial for the strength of the guideline.

Knowledge is Power



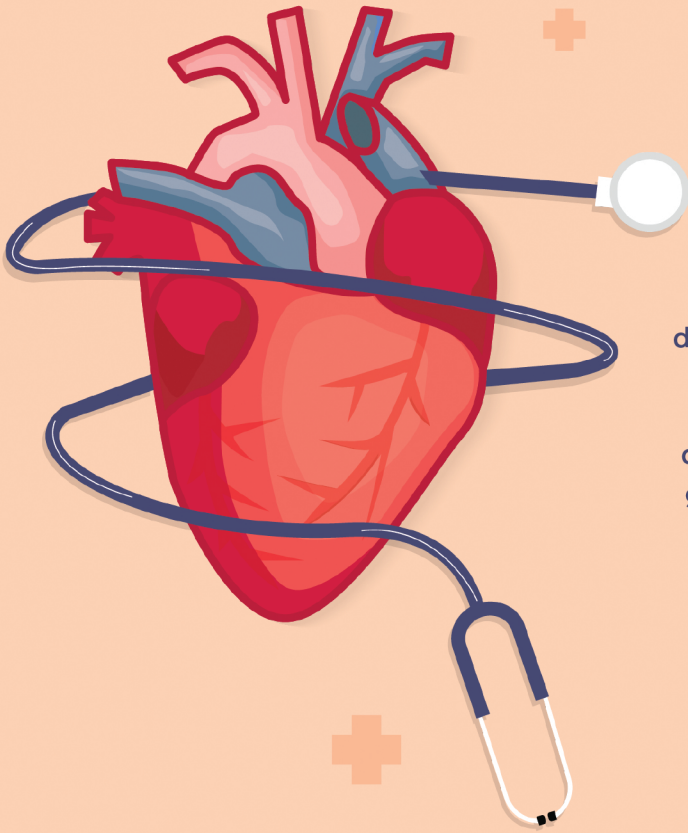
Improving health care for women depends on improving knowledge, education and awareness. Guidelines for heart disease usually come from the American College of Cardiology (ACC) and the American Heart Association (AHA). Guidelines can only be effective if they are widely distributed and read.

Take charge of your health:

- Learn about clinical guidelines for your condition
- Ask questions and speak up if something is not clear
- Partner with your care team to make informed decisions

As a woman with or at risk of heart disease, knowledge is power. The more informed you are, the better you can advocate for the care you deserve.

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Women with heart disease symptoms are often overlooked and less likely than men to receive appropriate therapies, interventions, or lifesaving devices. Clinical practice guidelines help doctors and healthcare professionals diagnose, treat, and prevent disease using the strongest available scientific evidence.

When followed, guidelines help patients receive high-quality care. However, because they're designed for the greatest benefit with the fewest side effects, clinicians also consider individual needs and typically engage patients in shared decisions about treatment options.



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://www.womenheart.org).

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