

[IMAGE]

Heart Disease in Women: Know the Facts

The facts say it all. An estimated 42 million American women are now living with cardiovascular disease, but too many are unaware of the threat they face. Statistics indicate, that approximately 250,000 women die from heart disease, making it the leading cause of death for women in the country.

As with men, the reasons women develop heart disease vary, but the most likely risk factors include hypertension, smoking, obesity and lack of exercise. A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Women's Association* examined these factors, and provided the following suggestions for lowering the risk of heart disease:

- Maintain healthy blood pressure. Studies have found that women with high blood pressure have a 3- to 4-fold increased risk of CHD, but that even minor reductions in diastolic blood pressure can have a significant lower the risk of CHD. Among the best ways to reduce hypertension are lifestyle changes, such as increasing physical activity, reducing weight, and decreasing alcohol and salt intake.
- Quit smoking. To help female smokers fight their addiction to cigarettes, the researchers recommended using nicotine replacement products, and adding agents such as bupropion to reduce cravings. They also stressed the role of the health practitioner in providing counsel and support.
- Women & Heart Disease - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Avoid excess weight gain/obesity. While there is no direct evidence that losing weight alone reduces the risk of CHD, weight loss does decrease blood pressure and may improve blood cholesterol levels, both of which are important factors for heart disease. As with smoking, the researchers noted that health care providers can affect their patients by providing information on diet and nutrition and encouraging them to adopt healthy eating habits.
- Exercise consistently. Dozens of studies have shown that a lack of exercise can increase the risk of a cardiovascular event, while regular exercise strengthens the heart and increases blood flow. Health care providers should encourage regular exercise as one of the best ways to lower the risk of CHD.

By living a healthy lifestyle, exercising regularly, eating a nutritious, well-balanced diet and avoiding (or stopping) smoking, women can significantly lower their risk of heart disease. Your doctor of chiropractic can create a lifestyle plan that incorporates elements of the above factors, and will help reduce your chances

of suffering a cardiovascular event.

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