



The Way to a Woman's Healthy Heart

...No, It's Not Flowers

by Shawna Page

Women are at risk for heart disease and heart attacks, just like men. In fact, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among women in Canada and worldwide. Women are 10 times more likely to die from cardiovascular disease than from any other disease, including cancer, and our risk is four times greater during and after menopause. Women are less likely than men to survive heart attacks and no one knows why. So, there's no question that taking steps to prevent heart problems before they arise makes a whole lot of sense.

The biggest factors that contribute to heart disease are smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, family history and age. Although you can't do much about your family history or your age, you can make lifestyle changes to avoid many of the other risk factors – starting now!

Supplementation. Omega-3 fatty acids and Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) are two

powerful and proven nutrients that can help lower heart disease risk. Omega-3 fatty acids modulate the production of powerful hormone-like substances known as eicosanoids. Those produced by omega-3s are anti-inflammatory and reduce blood clotting, lowering the risk of heart attack.

If an attack does occur, it's less likely to be fatal. One study of heart attack survivors showed that if they took 1,000 mg. of omega-3s daily, they lowered their risk of dying from heart disease by 25%. Omega-3 fats also lower blood triglycerides, reduce abnormal heart rhythms and the incidence of stroke, slow the buildup of artery-hardening plaques and lower blood pressure.

CoQ10 is naturally produced (and found in every cell) in the body, however levels of this essential nutrient decrease with age. It is also important to note that statin drugs, used for elevated cholesterol levels, deplete the body and heart of CoQ10. CoQ10 functions as a carrier that helps produce ATP, the fuel that energizes cells, and without adequate amounts of CoQ10, the heart does not have enough energy to pump blood efficiently.

Butt Out. If you smoke...QUIT. If you are a women age 50 or under and you smoke, your risk of dying from a heart attack is three times greater than that of an ex-smoker.

Get moving. Inactivity doubles our risk for heart disease. Our heart is a muscle that needs regular exercise to stay healthy.

Maintain a healthy weight. The risk of a heart attack is three times higher in women who are overweight.

Lower your cholesterol. 40% of women 55 years and older have elevated cholesterol. Choosing a diet low in fat and cholesterol can reduce blood cholesterol by as much as 5-20%.

Lower your blood pressure. 52% of women 45 years and older have elevated blood pressure. High blood pressure (over 140/90) causes blood to press too hard against the walls of the arteries, wearing down the lining over time. Note: consuming more than two alcoholic drinks per day increases the risk of high blood pressure.

Keep your blood sugars normal. A woman with diabetes has a five times higher risk of heart disease. Diabetes can damage artery walls, increasing the risk of developing atherosclerosis.



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