

**It Can Happen to You**

A heart attack or stroke can happen to you. More women in the United States die from heart disease than from any other cause, including all types of cancer. Heart disease and stroke – two main cardiovascular diseases – are the first and third leading causes of death in women. They can also lead to disability and decreased quality of life. It's important for women to take their risk for heart disease and stroke seriously. Here are some questions to help determine if you are at risk.

Are you a woman over 55 years old? Do you smoke? Are you overweight or have a waist measuring more than 35 inches (for women) or 40 inches (for men)? Do you get less than 30 minutes of physical activity on most days?

Is your blood pressure 140/90 mm Hg or higher? Has your health care provider told you that your blood pressure is too high? Has your health care provider told you that your total cholesterol level is 200 mg/dL or higher? Is your HDL ("happy" cholesterol) less than 40mg/dL?

Has anyone in your family had a heart attack or stroke? Do you have diabetes or gestational diabetes? Is your fasting blood sugar 126mg/dL or higher? Do you need medicine to control your blood sugar?

If you answer "yes" to any question or don't know some answers, make an appointment with your health care provider right away to learn your personal risks. Get ready for your appointment by writing down your questions and bringing them with you. Some questions you will want to discuss include:

- What is my risk for heart disease and stroke?
- What screening tests for heart disease do I need and when?
- What are my numbers and what do they mean?
  - Blood pressure \_\_\_\_\_
  - Cholesterol-total cholesterol, LDL ("lousy") cholesterol, HDL ("happy") cholesterol, and triglycerides \_\_\_\_\_
  - Body mass index and waist measurement \_\_\_\_\_
  - Blood sugar level (could indicate risk for diabetes) \_\_\_\_\_
- For smokers: What can you do to help me quit smoking?
- How much physical activity do I need to help protect my heart and blood vessels?
- What heart-healthy eating plan is best for me?

In addition to talking with a health care provider, free, quality resources are available to help women educate themselves about heart health. The National Institutes for Health and

American Heart Association provide reliable information. Their websites feature tools for calculating your risk of having a heart attack in the next ten years. Go to [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/index.htm#tools](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/index.htm#tools) and [www.GoRedForWomen.org](http://www.GoRedForWomen.org).

WVU Extension Service's Love Your Heart Movement is adapted from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's campaign and is targeted to help West Virginians become educated and enabled to take charge of their own health.

To learn more about ways WVU Extension uses trusted research and local experts to empower citizens to improve their health, visit [www.ext.wvu.edu](http://www.ext.wvu.edu), or contact your local office of the WVU Extension Service.

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