

Women and Heart Disease – Know the Facts

.. Presented by Associated Cardiologists, PC

Although over half of women think breast cancer is their biggest health threat, heart disease kills six times as many women, making it the number one cause of death in women in the United States. Over 500,000 women are affected each year.

Too often when heart disease is mentioned, people think of men. Stroke accounts for more death among women than men and heart attacks in women under 50 years old are twice as likely to result in death as they are in men. After menopause, women start to see heart disease at an equal rate to that of men.

Risk factors and symptoms are different for women than for men. Many women experience early warning signs that are more flu-like than the chest pain that their male counterparts experience. The milder symptoms in women also cause them to put off the trip to the emergency room and make it harder for physicians to diagnose a heart attack.

Family history is a consideration in determining risk but lifestyle accounts for many risk factors. Lifestyle risks can also be eliminated and/or reduced by changing your life habits. These risk factors include smoking, obesity, poor diet, lack of physical activity, stress, and high cholesterol levels.

Suggestions for protecting yourself include:

- 1. Don't Smoke and if you do – Quit.** Your risk of heart disease drops dramatically within the first year after your quit.
- 2. Exercise Regularly.** Talk to your doctor and determine what type of exercise and how often is best for you. Moderate physical activity can reduce your risk by nearly 25%.
- 3. Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight increases your risk for not only heart disease but also diabetes and high blood pressure. Even small reductions in weight can lower your blood pressure, cholesterol level and your risk of diabetes.
- 4. Eat a heart-healthy diet.** Eating a diet rich in vegetables, fruits and whole grains can help protect cardiovascular disease. Make healthy choices by reading the labels and reducing the fat calories you consume.

Heart disease is often avoidable and getting regular health screenings can help determine what course of action you should take to prevent heart disease.

Associated Cardiologists, P.C. provides expert cardiovascular care delivered with emphasis on both prevention and treatment. For further information about any of the services provided by Associated Cardiologists, P.C. or to have a cardiologist speak at an organizational meeting, please call 920-4400.