

CALLING ALL WOMEN... ARE YOU AT RISK OF A HEART ATTACK??

HEART DISEASE IS THE SINGLE BIGGEST KILLER OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN. IT KILLS 3 TIMES AS MANY WOMEN THAN BREAST CANCER. HOWEVER AWARENESS IS STILL LOW, <40% OF WOMEN KNOW HEART DISEASE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN WOMEN.



SOME WORRYING FACTS:

- Every hour of every day, an Australian woman dies of heart disease. ie 24 female lives are lost every day!
- 11 Australian women die each day from a heart attack
- One woman dies of a heart attack every two hours
- 50 Australian women have a heart attack each day
- Women have increased mortality compared to men after a heart attack

WOMEN WITH A HEART ATTACK OFTEN HAVE AN ATYPICAL PRESENTATION

- >40% of women will not present with chest pain,
- Other symptoms include pain in the jaw/neck/throat/shoulder/arm;
- Shortness of breath, a cold sweat, extreme fatigue, dizziness, and nausea.

RISK FACTORS:

- >90% of women have at least one risk factor for heart disease
- 50% have 2 or more risk factors
- 1 in 3 women have high blood pressure or high cholesterol: nearly half a million aged 30-65 have high blood pressure or high cholesterol without knowing it.
- A woman's risk of heart disease increases after menopause and gradually equals that of men.
- Traditional Cardiovascular risk factors include: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, a family history of heart disease, being overweight/obese, physically inactive, depression,
- < 1 in 3 women have had a heart health check with their GP.

- The Heart Foundation recommend a 'heart health check' for women >45yo.

YOUNG WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE

- Risk factors don't just begin after menopause, they start to appear in the late teens and early 20s.
- For women aged 18-44: 1 in 10 have high blood pressure, 1 in 5 have high cholesterol, close to 1 million are obese and >1 million are overweight.

OTHER RISK FACTORS THAT ARE PARTICULAR TO WOMEN

- Obstetric Risk factors: High blood pressure in pregnancy and preeclampsia, eclampsia, gestational diabetes, preterm delivery, low birth weight <2500g, stillbirth/miscarriage, all increase future cardiovascular risk.
- Polycystic ovarian syndrome – increases risk of future CVD, high blood pressure, diabetes and the metabolic syndrome
- Autoimmune diseases (eg Rheumatoid arthritis, SLE) are more prevalent in females, and increase their relative risk of coronary artery disease
- Radiation and chemotherapy for Breast cancer – chest radiation increases risk of ischaemic heart disease, particularly on the left side. Certain chemotherapy agents increase the risk of developing heart failure.

YOUNG WOMEN AND MIS

- Despite the reduction in MIs in the general population, there has been an increase in rates of MIs in young women.
- They have worse outcomes compared to similar aged men: such as higher in-hospital and 30day mortality rates and higher readmission rates.

- They also have more risk factors, more comorbidities and a poorer health status than similarly aged men.

KEY MESSAGES:

1. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in women
2. Women often have atypical symptoms
3. Know your risk factors – do a heart health check and measure your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol. Risk factors don't just begin after menopause.
4. Women with pregnancy complications such as hypertension, preeclampsia and gestational diabetes are at increased risk of future cardiovascular disease. If you have a history of these, you should be followed up regularly.
5. Other non traditional risk factors include polycystic ovarian syndrome, autoimmune diseases and treatment for breast cancer.
6. For more information visit: www.invisible.visible.org.au;
7. [Watch this video](#)
8. Listen to [Women and Heart Disease from Preventative Health in Podcasts.](#)

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