

# Women and Heart Disease

Heart disease is the number one cause of death of women in Missouri. The most common type of heart disease in the United States and Missouri is coronary heart disease, which can lead to heart attack.

The most common heart attack symptom for women, as well as men, is chest pain or discomfort that feels like pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain. But women are more likely than men to experience other warning signs. Many women fail to notice these symptoms because they often don't make their own health a top priority, and they still believe heart attacks happen primarily to men.

## Warning signs for women

A majority of women may have early warning signs more than a month before having a heart attack. It is important for women to recognize these signs to help prevent a heart attack or reduce the damage it can do to the heart.

Warning signs prior to having a heart attack include:

- Unusual fatigue
- Sleep disturbance
- Shortness of breath
- Indigestion
- Anxiety

Warning signs during a heart attack include:

- Shortness of breath
- Weakness
- Unusual fatigue
- Cold sweats
- Dizziness

**If you experience chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other warning signs, call 911 immediately.**

## Who is at risk?

You are at greater risk for heart disease if you:

- Have high blood pressure/high blood cholesterol
- Have diabetes
- Smoke



- Are not physically active
- Are post-menopausal
- Don't see a health care provider regularly
- Are overweight

Determine your risk by utilizing the American Heart Association risk calculator at [www.heart.org/gglRisk/main\\_en\\_US.html](http://www.heart.org/gglRisk/main_en_US.html).

## Reducing the risk

You can do a number of things to reduce your risk of developing heart disease:

- Monitor blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Take medications as prescribed.
- See a health care provider for regular medical check-ups.
- Quit smoking.
- Be physically active for 30 minutes or more on most days of the week.
- Eat a healthy diet to maintain a healthy weight.

More information can be found at:  
[health.mo.gov/heartdisease](http://health.mo.gov/heartdisease)

