

Here are more unsettling facts:

- Heart disease causes 1 in 3 women's deaths each year, killing approximately one woman every minute.
- 90 percent of women have one or more risk factors for developing heart disease.
- Since 1984, more women than men have died each year from heart disease and the gap between men and women's survival continues to widen.
- The symptoms of heart disease can be different in women vs. men, and are often misunderstood.
- While 1 in 31 American women dies from breast cancer each year, 1 in 3 dies of heart disease.

It's time to focus on finding, and becoming the solution. Here's what you need to know about the causes of heart disease and ways you can prevent it.

### **WHAT CAUSES HEART DISEASE?**

Heart disease affects the blood vessels and cardiovascular system. Numerous problems can result from this, many of which are related to a process called [atherosclerosis](#), a condition that develops when plaque builds up in the walls of the arteries. This buildup narrows the arteries, making it harder for blood to flow through. If a blood clot forms, it can stop the blood flow. This can cause a heart attack or stroke.

But it doesn't end there. Heart disease can take many other forms as well:

- **Heart failure or congestive heart failure**, which means that the heart is still working, but it isn't pumping blood as well as it should, or getting enough oxygen.
- **Arrhythmia or an abnormal rhythm of the heart**, which means the heart is either beating too fast, too slow or irregularly. This can affect how well the heart is functioning and whether or not the heart is able to pump enough blood to meet the body's needs.
- **Heart valve problems** can lead to the heart not opening enough to allow proper blood flow. Sometimes the heart valves don't close and blood leaks through, or the valve leaflets bulge or prolapse into the upper chamber, causing blood to flow backward through them.

### **HOW CAN I PREVENT IT?**

Many things can put you at risk for these problems – one's you can control, and others that you can't. But the key takeaway is that with the right information, education and care, heart disease in women can be treated, prevented and even ended.

Studies show that healthy choices have resulted in 330 fewer women dying from heart disease per day. Here are a few lifestyle changes you should make:

- [Don't smoke](#)
- Manage your blood sugar
- Get your [blood pressure](#) under control
- Lower your [cholesterol](#)
- Know your [family history](#)
- [Stay active](#)
- Lose weight
- [Eat healthy](#)