



THE HEART TRUTH

From Dr. Elizabeth Nabel

As Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), which created the award-winning Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness as part of *The Heart Truth* campaign, I am pleased to share that progress is being made in the fight against heart disease in women. As we celebrate our fifth year, women all across the country are aware that heart disease is their #1 killer, and they are wearing the Red Dress Pin, sharing *The Heart Truth* with loved ones and friends, and taking charge of their health.

The good news is that women are living longer, healthier lives, and fewer are dying of heart disease.

When NHLBI started *The Heart Truth* movement in 2002, 1 in 3 women died of heart disease. After analyzing the most recent data available, we are pleased to report that this has changed to 1 in 4—**a decrease of nearly 17,000 deaths**. The number of deaths has gone down in each year from 2000 to 2004, a consecutive yearly decline that has not occurred before. In addition, we are happy to report that more women are aware that heart disease is their leading cause of death, up from 34 percent of women in 2000 to 55 percent of women in 2005. Even with this great news, it is important to recognize that **many challenges still remain**.

In fact, one-third of women underestimate their own risk for heart disease. Most women fail to make the connection between risk factors and their personal risk for developing heart disease. Yet an astonishing 80 percent of midlife women (ages 40 to 60) have one or more risk factors for heart disease.

The Heart Truth campaign continues to lead the nation in a landmark heart health movement to educate women about the seriousness of heart disease. Our goal for 2007 is to achieve even greater awareness and heart health for women. Together, we can ensure that all women know *The Heart Truth*, and take action to lower their risk for heart disease.

Elizabeth G. Nabel, MD

Director

Heart Disease Risk Factors

Risk factors are habits or conditions that increase the chance of developing a disease. Some risk factors, such as age (55 or older for women) and family history of early heart disease, can't be changed. The modifiable risk factors for heart disease include the following:

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- High blood cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Being overweight or obese
- Being physically inactive

Women should talk to a healthcare professional about their risks and what they can do to lower them, especially if they have multiple risk factors for heart disease.

The "Multiplier Effect"

Many women don't realize that their risk for heart disease significantly increases based on the number of risk factors they have. In fact, having just one risk factor can increase a woman's chance of developing heart disease twofold. Having two risk factors increases the chance fourfold, and having three or more risk factors increases a woman's chance of developing heart disease more than tenfold.

Multiple Risk Factors At A Glance

- 33 percent of midlife women have one modifiable risk factor for heart disease
- 31 percent of midlife women have two modifiable risk factors for heart disease
- 17 percent of midlife women have three or more modifiable risk factors for heart disease

African American and Hispanic Women have higher rates of some risk factors and are disproportionately affected by heart disease.

Managing Risk Factors

Although heart disease is not curable, it is never too late to take action to prevent it. Often, modifying risk factors is all that's needed to significantly reduce one's risk. Americans can lower their risk by as much as 82 percent just by leading a healthy lifestyle.

About The Heart Truth

The Heart Truth is a national campaign for women about heart disease sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. To learn more, visit www.hearttruth.gov.



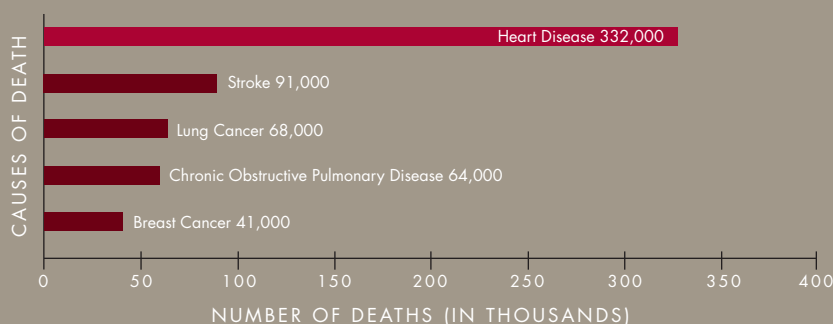
Women &
Heart Disease

TIPS FOR HEART HEALTH

- **Don't smoke, and if you do, quit.**
Women who smoke are two to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than nonsmoking women. Smoking also boosts the risk of stroke and cancer.
- **Aim for a healthy weight.**
It's important for a long, vigorous life. Overweight and obesity cause many preventable deaths.
- **Get moving.**
Make a commitment to be more physically active. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.
- **Eat for heart health.**
Choose a diet low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol, and moderate in total fat.
- **Know your numbers.**
Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose. Work with your doctor to improve any numbers that are not normal.

Leading Causes of Death for American Women (2004)

One in four women dies from heart disease. It's the #1 killer of women, regardless of race or ethnicity. It also strikes at younger ages than most people think, and the risk rises in middle age. Two-thirds of women who have heart attacks never fully recover.



Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (2006). Numbers of deaths are rounded to the nearest thousand.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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