

THE HEART
truth



FOR WOMEN



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

What's a *Red Dress* Got to Do With It?

The campaign message is paired with an arresting visual—the Red Dress—designed to warn women that heart disease is their #1 killer. *The Heart Truth*® created and introduced the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness in 2002 to deliver an urgent wake-up call to American women. The Red Dress® reminds women of the need to protect their heart health, and inspires them to take action.



ERIN

“No one, least of all me, was ever really concerned about my heart health because I didn’t have any risk factors. One day I started coughing and couldn’t stop and went to the emergency room where I was told that I was having a flash pulmonary edema and congestive heart failure. So often women tend to put everyone they care for in front of their own needs and ignore the symptoms. To women, I say pay attention to your body, don’t just ignore the symptoms, empower yourself with knowledge—insist on proper cardiac care.”

THE HEART *truth*:

Heart Disease is the #1 Killer of Women

The Heart Truth is that one in four American women dies of heart disease, and most fail to make the connection between risk factors—such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol—and their personal risk of developing heart disease.

The Heart Truth Campaign: Serious Messages about Women's Heart Health

The Heart Truth is a national awareness campaign for women about heart disease sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Through the campaign, NHLBI leads the nation in a landmark heart health awareness movement that is being embraced by millions who share the common goal of better heart health for all women.

The Heart Truth campaign warns women about heart disease and provides tools to help them take action against its risk factors. It is primarily targeted to women ages 40 to 60, the time when a woman's risk of heart disease begins to increase. However, it's never too early—or too late—to take action to prevent and control risk factors since heart disease develops over time and can start at a young age—even in the teen years.



DIANE

“By age 43, I had suffered from congestive heart failure and a damaged heart muscle. My experience with heart disease started with typical symptoms. It took me some time to get my strength back, but now I exercise regularly and eat healthy foods. To me, *The Heart Truth* is a way of informing women about what they can do to prevent heart disease.”



NORMA

“I have some risk factors for heart disease: high cholesterol, age, and family history. I’ve had a lot of friends who have had heart attacks and this has made me aware that I need to take care of myself. You can’t wait until a heart attack happens, by then it’s too late. I try to live a healthy lifestyle by eating healthy foods and finding creative ways to exercise—like dancing.”

Ask Your Doctor About THE HEART *truth*

Know the risk factors for heart disease: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, being overweight or obese, being physically inactive, age (55 or older for women), and family history. Talk to your doctor. Find out your risk. And take action to lower it.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

1. What is my risk for heart disease?
2. What screening or diagnostic tests for heart disease do I need?
3. What are my numbers and what do they mean?
 - Blood pressure
 - Cholesterol—total cholesterol, LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, HDL (“good”) cholesterol, and triglycerides
 - Body mass index and waist circumference measurement
 - Blood sugar level (could indicate risk for diabetes)
4. What can you do to help me quit smoking?
5. How much physical activity do I need to help protect my heart?
6. What is a heart-healthy eating plan for me?



©, ™ *The Heart Truth*, its logo and The Red Dress are trademarks of HHS.

© National Wear Red Day is a registered trademark of HHS and AHA.

Campaign Resources and Activities

The campaign offers a wide variety of resources to help individuals and local communities spread *The Heart Truth*, including:

Educational materials—For women to learn about heart disease and how to reduce their risks.

The *Red Dress Pin*—The national symbol for women and heart disease awareness.

Speaker's Kit—A “talk-in-a-box”—and other promotional materials to facilitate spreading *The Heart Truth* message in local communities.

National Wear Red Day[®] (first Friday in February) materials—Including promotional Web banners, newsletter articles, flyers, posters, and much more to help communities promote this life-saving awareness movement.

Online Toolkit—Containing activity ideas and materials to help individuals and organizations plan their own *Heart Truth* events throughout the year.

Community programs—Such as the Single City program, *The Heart Truth* Champions program, and *The Heart Truth* Road Show, that extend the reach of *The Heart Truth* messages into local communities.

Start by learning *The Heart Truth* at **www.hearttruth.gov**. You'll find out how heart disease can affect you personally—and why women everywhere are embracing *The Heart Truth*.

The Heart Truth campaign is sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with: Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; American Heart Association; WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease; and other organizations committed to the health and well-being of women.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health



**National Heart
Lung and Blood Institute**
People Science Health

NIH Publication No. 07-5206
Originally printed September 2002
Revised January 2008