

Women and Cardiovascular Diseases Fact Sheet

- Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women over the age of 25.
- Heart attack, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases claim the lives of more than one-half million women each year—more lives than the next 14 causes of death *combined*, including all forms of cancer.
- One woman in eight will develop breast cancer over the course of her lifetime, but only one in 28 will die of it. **Almost one in every two women who die will die of heart disease or stroke.**
- A recent survey commissioned by the American Heart Association shows that only 8 percent of American women consider heart disease and stroke their greatest health threats.
- More than one in five females have some form of cardiovascular disease.
- Every year since 1984 more women than men have died of cardiovascular diseases. The difference in deaths currently is more than 500,000.
- Coronary heart disease is the No. 1 single killer of American women.
- About 18,500 females under age 65 die of coronary heart disease each year; nearly 35 percent of them are under age 55.
- In 63 percent of women who died suddenly of coronary heart disease, there was no previous evidence of the disease.
- Within six years after a recognized heart attack: 35 percent of women will have another heart attack; 14 percent will develop chest pain; 11 percent will have a stroke; 46 percent will be disabled with heart failure; and 6 percent will experience sudden cardiac death.
- At older ages, women who have heart attacks are more likely than men to die from them within a few weeks. Studies show that 38 percent of women die within a year compared to 25 percent of men because women are older and sicker when they have heart attacks.
- 1998 death rates from cardiovascular diseases were higher for African-American women than for White women (294.9 deaths per 100,000 white females compared with 400.7 deaths per 100,000 African-American females).
- Stroke is the third leading cause of death for American women, behind diseases of the heart and cancer. It is a leading cause of serious, long-term disability.
- In 1998 over 97,000 females died from stroke, which was over 61 percent or three of every five stroke deaths that year.

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