



# Heart Disease: What Women Need to Know About their #1 Cause of Death

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. But, a lack of awareness and avoidance of doctor visits means that many women don't seek the proper treatment for their number one health risk.

Research from the [Journal of the American College of Cardiology](#) found that just 40 percent of women said that they received a heart health assessment in the last year when seeing a physician or medical provider. Of the 1,011 women surveyed, 63 percent said they sometimes put off medical visits.

A similar lack of knowledge of women's heart health risks was shown in HeartFlow's recent [consumer survey](#). Half of those surveyed mistakenly believe that breast cancer is the leading cause of death for women. More than half of the women participating in the survey didn't know that heart disease is their biggest threat. More awareness is needed to help women understand their risk factors, identify warning signs and prioritize their heart health.

## Know the Symptoms

While many tend to think of heart disease and heart attacks as issues impacting older men, women have just as much at stake. In fact, there are certain symptoms that women in particular may experience.

Despite the stereotype of dramatic heart attack symptoms often shown in the media – a man gasping, clutching his chest and falling to the ground – some people may experience much subtler symptoms, according to the [American Heart Association](#) (AHA). These subtler symptoms can include:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

According to the [AHA](#), women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of these common symptoms. It's important to know the warning signs so you know when to seek immediate help.

## Manage Your Risk Factors

Today, 43.8 million women are currently living with some form of cardiovascular disease, while 6.6 million women are currently living with coronary heart disease, according to [WomenHeart](#). While certain [risk factors](#) like a family history of heart disease cannot be changed, there are many factors that can be modified with lifestyle changes. These include:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Smoking
- Being overweight

Engage in healthy lifestyle choices like getting regular [exercise](#), [quitting smoking](#) and [eating healthy](#) to help reduce your risk factors for heart disease.

## Talk To Your Doctor

Everyone's health, risk factors and symptoms may be different. It's important to be informed and to talk to your doctor about how to implement a [healthy lifestyle](#). In addition, ask your doctor about your diagnostic test options. There are many options your physician can choose from, but your opinion matters too. Discuss the options, weigh the pros and cons, and together decide on the course of action that is best for you.

For more heart health tips, [click here](#).

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The HeartFlow Analysis is a personalized cardiac test indicated for use in clinically stable symptomatic patients with coronary artery disease. The information provided by the HeartFlow Analysis is intended to be used in conjunction with the patient's clinical history, symptoms and other diagnostic tests, as well as the clinician's professional judgment. Patient symptoms must be documented in the patient's medical record. While no diagnostic test is perfect, the HeartFlow Analysis has demonstrated higher diagnostic performance compared to other non-invasive cardiac tests<sup>1</sup>. If you are a patient and suspect this test may be right for you, please speak with your doctor. <sup>1</sup>Nørgaard, et al. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2014; Driessen, et al. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2018.