



Women's Health Across the Lifespan



What You Should Know:

Heart Disease

Most women do not realize that heart disease is the number one killer of women. One in four women in the United States dies of heart disease, more than breast cancer and all other cancers combined. Heart attack symptoms differ between women and men. Women are more likely to feel shortness of breath, fatigue, abdominal pressure, nausea or heartburn; jaw, neck, back or upper shoulder pain. Age is considered a major risk factor for women age 55 or older. **If you think you are having a heart attack, call 911 immediately.**

Stroke

A stroke is sometimes called a brain attack. A stroke occurs when part of the brain does not get the blood it needs. A stroke happens fast. The most common signs are: sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg. Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes. Sudden trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance. Women may experience sudden hiccups, sudden nausea, sudden chest pain and shortness of breath. **If you have any of these symptoms call 911 immediately.**

Breast Cancer

A mammogram is a picture of the breast made with x-rays. Women in their 40s and older should have mammograms every one to two years. Women who are younger than 40 and have risk factors for breast cancer should ask their health care provider whether to have mammograms and how often to have them. Risk factors for cancer include: age, personal history of breast cancer, family history of breast cancer, being overweight or obese after menopause, lack of physical activity, drinking alcohol. Who is at the greatest risk for breast cancer? Women who had their first menstrual period before 12, women who go through menopause after age 55 and women who never had children. The older a woman is when she has her first child, the greater her chance of breast cancer.

Bone Health

Between the ages of 10-18 is when your body makes the bone that must last a lifetime. After 18, bone mass can begin to be lost and that can lead to osteoporosis when you get older. Osteoporosis is a disease of progressive bone loss which can lead to easily breaking your bones. So it is really important to be at your best calcium levels by age 18. Regular exercise and calcium will build bone mass in the 10-18 range. You need 1300 milligrams of calcium each day between these ages. Milk, yogurt, cheddar cheese, orange juice with calcium, almonds and broccoli are all foods with lots of calcium. **Whatever your age, it is important to get enough calcium and Vitamin D.** The body loses calcium every day and Vitamin D helps the body absorb the calcium you take in.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease that increases sugar in the blood. There is no cure for diabetes, but it can be controlled. If left untreated, diabetes can be a risk factor for heart disease. It can also lead to blindness, amputation of your body parts or kidney failure. There are two types of diabetes, Type 1 and Type 2. Type 1 usually occurs in childhood and is caused by the body's failure to make insulin. Type 2 is the more common type. It usually occurs in adults. Although the insulin is still being made, it is not working as it should. Symptoms for diabetes include: extreme thirst, frequent urination, blurred vision, unexplained weight loss, poor healing of sores or wounds and feeling very tired. If you have any of these symptoms, you should call your doctor. People who are overweight, have high cholesterol, high blood pressure or a family history of diabetes are at a greater risk for diabetes.

A nutritious diet filled with fruits and vegetables and plenty of regular exercise (at least 30 minutes a day) can help you avoid all of these diseases. You can take charge of your own health by making a few simple changes!

Eight Steps to Take *Before* You Get Pregnant!

Studies show that babies are healthier if Mom is healthy **BEFORE** she gets pregnant.

- 1. Take folic acid.** Take a multivitamin with 400 micrograms of folic acid every day. Taking folic acid before and during early pregnancy can help your baby's brain and spinal cord develop properly. Look on the label of the vitamin bottle to see if it has the correct amount of folic acid.
- 2. Get a checkup before pregnancy.** Preconception care is the medical care you get **before** you become pregnant. The goal is to find health and lifestyle risks that may affect your pregnancy. One of the most important steps you can take to have a healthy pregnancy is to see your doctor before you conceive. Don't forget about dental health! See your dentist before you get pregnant. If there's any chance you may be pregnant, tell your dentist. Wait until after the baby to have dental x-rays.
- 3. Eat right and maintain a healthy weight.** You'll feel better and start your pregnancy off right if you eat a variety of nutritious foods every day. Avoid foods high in fat and sugar. Eat foods from each of the five food groups: fruits, vegetables, proteins (like chicken, fish and dried beans), grains and milk products. Cut back on caffeine. Limit the coffee you drink to 2 to 2 1/2 cups each day. Try decaffeinated coffees and, or drink water. Caffeine is also found in chocolate and soda.
- 4. Stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.** Smoking may make it harder for you to get pregnant. If you smoke while you are pregnant, your baby is at greater risk for being born too early or too small. Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of problems during pregnancy and SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). The best time to stop smoking is before you get pregnant. Try to always avoid secondhand smoke.
- 5. Stop drinking alcohol.** Drinking alcohol can make it harder for you to get pregnant. Drinking alcohol before or during pregnancy can cause your baby to have conditions that can create lifelong problems.
- 6. Don't use illegal drugs.** Taking illegal or "street drugs" during pregnancy is risky for mother and baby. Women who use cocaine are at higher risk of miscarriage and having a baby too early. Babies exposed to illegal drugs also are more likely to have learning or behavioral problems later in life. Women who use drugs may have babies that are too small.
- 7. Avoid infections.** Wash your hands well with soap and water after using the bathroom, blowing your nose or touching soil. Avoid unsafe foods such as raw meat and fish and unpasteurized milk products. Wash all fruits and vegetables well. If you have a cat, ask someone else to change the litter box. Stay away from pet mice, hamsters and guinea pigs. Find out if you have a sexually transmitted disease (STD). To avoid STD's, have sex with only one person who doesn't have any other sex partners and who doesn't have an STD.
- 8. Avoid stress and get fit.** High levels of stress may increase the risk of having your baby too early and the baby being too small. An easy way to relax is to practice deep breathing for several minutes each day. If you are not already exercising, now is a good time to start. Exercising for 30 minutes on all or most days of the week is a good way to help maintain or lose weight, build fitness and reduce stress. Some good choices for exercise before and during pregnancy include walking, swimming and yoga.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor Regarding Heart Health

1. What is my risk for heart disease?
2. What is my blood pressure? What does it mean for me, and what do I need to do about it?
3. What are my cholesterol numbers? (These include total cholesterol, LDL or "bad" cholesterol, HDL or "good" cholesterol, and triglycerides.) What do they mean for me, and what do I need to do about them?
4. What is my "body mass index" and waist measurement? Do they indicate that I need to lose weight for my health?
5. What is my blood sugar level, and does it mean I'm at risk for diabetes?
6. What other screening tests for heart disease do I need? How often should I return for checkups for my heart health?
7. What can you do to help me quit smoking?
8. How much physical activity do I need to help protect my heart?
9. What is a heart-healthy eating plan for me? Should I see a registered dietitian or qualified nutritionist to learn more about healthy eating?
10. How can I tell if I'm having a heart attack?



Need help to quit smoking? Call the Florida Quitline toll-free at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW (1-877-822-6669). You CAN do it! You can get five proactive counseling sessions for free! (Pregnant women can get eight free sessions)