

# Women Outnumber Men in Heart Health Battle

By Linda Penkala



The wish of many women would be to have more than 50% of U.S. companies with women as their CEOs, or to have a higher number of women as presidents of universities.

But the fact today is that women have surpassed men in a negative category: According to the World Health Organization and the United Nations, the number of women who have died from cardiovascular disease has surpassed the number of men who have died from the health issue, and it happened way back in 2003.

Heart disease was virtually unheard of 150 years ago; but today, it is the No. 1 cause of death in the U.S., killing more women than all forms of cancer, chronic lung disease, AIDS and diabetes combined, according to Dr. Robert Willix, Jr., founder and CEO of Enlightened Living Medicine, West Palm Beach, Fla.

One in four women dies of heart disease, while one in 30 women die of breast cancer; and within six years of having a heart attack, 46% of women will die.

Hispanic women are more likely to take preventive actions for health, but only three out of 10 are aware they are at a

higher risk for heart disease, and succumb 10 years earlier than Caucasian women. For African-American women, cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 cause of death; and for ages 10 and up, 46% already have cardiovascular disease.

## Most Common Symptoms

Approximately 71% of women had unexplained or unusual fatigue, while 48% reported having a sleep disturbance of some kind, and 42% experienced shortness of breath.

Should the above facts startle you or leave you to wonder how this is not a man's disease anymore, here is some information to help you better understand.

Recognizing "A-fib," or arterial fibrillation, which is rapid beating of the heart, is critical. The diagnosis, which often begins with a visit to the emergency room, can be confirmed by running stress tests, a 24/7 halter monitor and bloodwork. Even with an incidence of A-fib, a heart can still be quite healthy, as it can be caused simply by stress and too much caffeine.

On that note, an aspirin a day, meditation, yoga, monthly massages, chiropractic and aromatherapy might become part of a healthy regimen. Here are nine

Pillars of Prevention from the Wise Heart Health for Women program.

1. *Assess your stress.* Emotional weight in the heart of negativity, toxic relations, grief, sadness and lack of forgiveness.
2. *Know your cholesterol numbers.* Know your HDL and LDL levels, and your CRP (C-reactive protein), which is an inflammatory marker.
3. *Movement as medicine.* Lack of exercise doubles chances of dying from heart disease.
4. *Stop smoking.* Women smokers risk having a heart attack 19 years earlier than nonsmokers.
5. *Eat and drink heart healthy.* The heart is a muscle, so stay hydrated; drink one-half of your weight in ounces per day. Alcohol affects heart rhythm, so moderation is key; plus, eat red fruits and veggies.
6. *Slow down.* Relax. Nourish quiet time through prayer, meditation, yoga, massage, acupuncture and shiatsu, as they help soothe and comfort the mind and body.
7. *Gather with friends.* Nurturing friendships helps increase the "happy" hormone oxytocin and results in reducing the cortisol through bonding and camaraderie.
8. *Regular dental cleaning.* The connection between oral and heart health is strong, as the

health of the body begins in the mouth, as many dentists share with patients.

9. *Laugh more.* Strong medicine that decreases stress hormones, improves immune cells and is an antidote to stress, increases oxygen to the brain and body and offers an internal jog.

It's key to know that stress affects heart health and that emotions play a huge role, especially the negative ones of anger, fear and rage. Scientists are finding the heart communicates with the brain more than the brain does with the heart.

The nonprofit [www.heart-math.org](http://www.heart-math.org) is a scientific warehouse of knowledge on the heart and the power of appreciation, love and positive emotions to heal. With 90% of all illness and disease being stress related, knowing the emotions/heart link is important.

In the field of massage therapy, it is widely known that the cornerstone of many illnesses begins with the emotions. The synergy of silence, touch, aromatherapy and intention allow many to stay on track to not be part of those statistics.

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