

# Listen up, Ladies...

## It's American Heart Month

### What is Heart Disease?

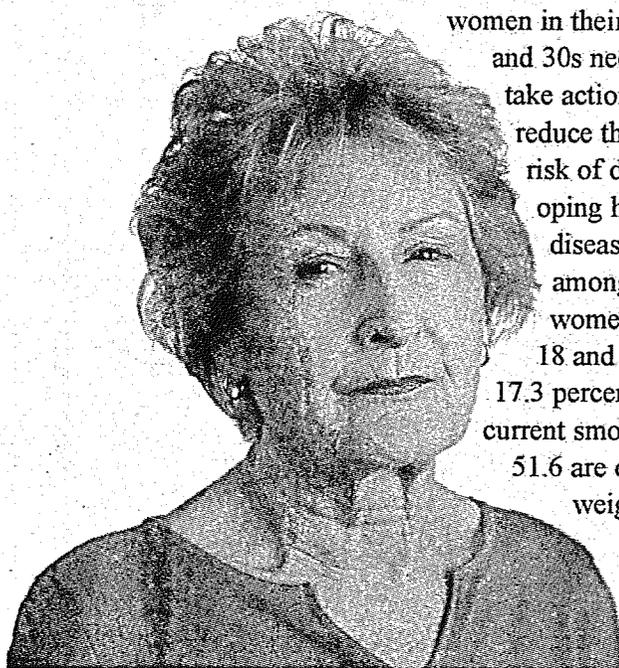
When you hear the term "heart disease," you may think, "That's a man's disease" or "Not my problem." But here is *The Heart Truth*<sup>®</sup>: one in four women in the United States dies of heart disease, while one in 30 dies of breast cancer. If you've got a heart, heart disease could be your problem.

### What Are the Risk Factors for Heart Disease?

An astonishing 80 percent of women ages 40 to 60 have one or more risk factor for heart disease. Having one or more risk factors dramatically increases a woman's chance of developing heart disease because risk factors tend to worsen each other's effects. In fact, according to research compiled by the NHLBI, having just one risk factor doubles your chance of developing heart disease.

Whatever a woman's age, she needs to take action to protect her heart health. Heart disease can begin early, even in the teen years, and

women in their 20s and 30s need to take action to reduce their risk of developing heart disease. Yet among U.S. women ages 18 and older, 17.3 percent are current smokers, 51.6 are overweight (BMI of 25



or greater), 27 percent have hypertension, 35 percent have high cholesterol, and 53 percent do not meet physical activity recommendations. African American and Hispanic women, in particular, have higher rates of some risk factors for heart disease and are disproportionately affected by the disease compared to white women. More than 80 percent of midlife African American women are overweight or obese, 52 percent have hypertension, and 14 percent have been diagnosed with diabetes. Some 83 percent of midlife Hispanic women are overweight or obese, and more than 10 percent have been diagnosed with diabetes.

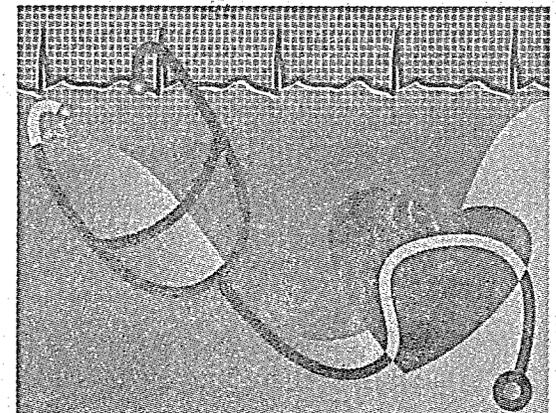
### How Do I Find Out if I Am at Risk for Heart Disease?

Some women believe that doing just one healthy thing will take care of all their heart disease risk. For example, they may think that if they walk or swim regularly, they can still smoke and stay fairly healthy. This is wrong. To protect your heart, it is vital to make changes that address each risk factor you have.

A damaged heart can damage your life by interfering with enjoyable activities and even your ability to do simple things, such as taking a walk or climbing steps. Heart disease cannot be "cured." It is a lifelong condition—once you get it, you'll always have it.

Fortunately, it's a problem you can do something about. Find out your risk for heart disease and take steps to prevent and control it. Talk to your doctor to get more answers. Start taking action today to protect your heart. Heart disease is preventable—by making healthy lifestyle changes and taking steps to manage risk factors, women can reduce their risk for heart disease.

Source: National Heart Lung and Blood Institute



## PREVENTION

### What You Can Do Live a Healthy Lifestyle

♥ Eat a healthy diet. Choosing healthful meal and snack options can help you avoid heart disease and its complications. Be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Eating foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol and high in fiber can help prevent high blood cholesterol. Limiting salt or sodium in your diet can also lower your blood pressure.

♥ Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight or obese can increase your risk for heart disease. To determine whether your weight is in a healthy range, doctors often calculate a number called the body mass index (BMI). Doctors sometimes also use waist and hip measurements to measure a person's excess body fat.

♥ Exercise regularly. Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower cholesterol and blood pressure. The Surgeon General recommends that adults should engage in moderate-intensity exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.

♥ Don't smoke. Cigarette smoking greatly increases your risk for heart disease. So, if you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk for heart disease. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit.

♥ Limit alcohol use. Avoid drinking too much alcohol, which causes high blood pressure.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention