



HOLY FAMILY
PARISH

PARISH NURSE MINISTRY NEWSLETTER

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Cardiac Events In Women February Heart Health Month

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Your love.

Cardiac disease is the number one killer of women in the United States. Despite this fact, women continue to be under-diagnosed and under treated and to experience greater mortality after acute myocardial infarctions (MI). Prior to menopause, women have some hormonal protection against cardiac disease. After menopause, their risk rapidly equals that of a man. Women are generally 10 years older than a man when they experience their first MI. (65 for women, 55 for men). Women are 50% less likely than men to survive their first MI and considerably more likely to experience a second heart attack within a year. These statistics are generally true, but if a woman of any age experiences any symptoms of cardiac disease, she should not delay in seeking medical help.

Many women still fail to recognize their risk for cardiac disease. They are not aware of the signs and symptoms of acute cardiac events. Compounding this lack of knowledge is the fact that many women's presenting symptoms differ from those of men.

Symptoms:

There are differences in the ways men and women describe their pain. Men describe their chest pain as a "band around their chest" while women are more likely to describe a feeling of pressure on their chest. The "typical presenting symptoms include severe chest pain not alleviated by nitroglycerine or rest and may last longer than 15 minutes. Pain may radiate to the arm, neck, back or epigastric areas. Shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, light headedness, and diaphoresis (profuse sweating) may also be present.

In women, presenting symptoms often differ. Women often complain of fatigue, indigestion, anxiety, and shortness of breath before an MI and may not recognize these symptoms as indicative of cardiac disease. Women often experience back pain rather than substernal pain or left sided chest pain. They may describe it as numbness, tingling, or burning, or a short, stabbing feeling rather than as pain. Compared to men, women more often report indigestion, palpitations, nausea, unusual fatigue, and feelings of numbness in their hands. Sometimes there are no symptoms of a myocardial infarction, referred to as a "silent myocardial infarction." Groups more likely to experience a "silent" heart attack include women, older adults, and persons who are diabetic.

Lifestyle Modifications:

There are a number of lifestyle modifications women can make to reduce their risk for heart disease. For example, an exercise regimen that reduces the size of a woman's waist is recommended. Research shows that women with a waistline of 35 inches or more are at increased risk for heart disease compared to women with smaller waistlines.

Stop smoking tobacco products. Eat meals low in fat and sodium. Take steps to control hypertension, cholesterol, and diabetes. Be sure to consult your healthcare physician before taking measures on your own. Have a yearly checkup. Know your heart risk. The biggest modifier is knowledge, or lack thereof. Women need to be educated regarding their risk for heart disease, how to recognize it, and what to do to prevent and / or deal with it. **REMEMBER, if you should experience or suspect a heart attack do not delay, call 911 and get emergency help.**

Some references from the Nightingale Newsletter of the National Association of Physician Nurses.

**To contact Holy Family Parish Nurse Ministry call 330-688-6412, ext. 462
or view at www.holyfamilystow.org.**