

FOCUS

ON

Heart Health for Women

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Oklahoma State University
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Heart disease once thought to be a man's disease is the leading cause of death in women. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Heart Association (AHA) report that heart disease kills an estimated 240,000 American women every year. This number is five times the number of women who die from breast cancer. Below are state and national statistics about women and heart disease:

- Women suffer about 49 percent of the 480,000 heart disease deaths that occur in America every year.
- More women than men die from a heart attack within the first year of their first heart attack (44% versus 27 %).
- Heart attack kills 21,000 women under the age of 65, and 29 percent of them are under the age of 55, and one in eight women age 45 and over has had a heart attack.
- Black women have 33 percent higher death rate from coronary heart disease than white women, and have a 77 percent higher death rate from stroke.
- Coronary heart disease is a risk factor for stroke which kills over 87,000 women annually. Below are nine critical questions and answers about women and heart disease:

According to the Oklahoma state Department:

- Nearly one out of every three adult women in Oklahoma has high blood pressure.
- A higher percentage of women than men have total blood cholesterol of 200mg/dL or higher, beginning at age 50.
- Nearly one out of every three adult women in Oklahoma has high blood cholesterol.
- Nearly one of every four adult women in Oklahoma smokes, giving them a two- to six-fold increase in risk of a heart attack.
- Nearly one in two adult women in Oklahoma are overweight, a risk that contributes to 32 percent of heart disease deaths each year. Proper weight maintenance is another method to control heart disease risk factors.

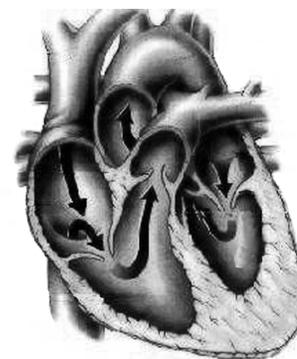
The ever expanding roles of the Cooperative Extension professional his/her proximity with the grass-root clientele, makes this professional one of the most valuable interventionist in reducing the risk factors of heart disease, and improving the quality of lives for Oklahoma and American women. Knowledge of the risk factors of heart disease is crucial in empowering the cooperative extension professional in partnership for reducing the risk factors of heart disease.


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OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE
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In This Issue –

- What Women Need to Know about Risk Factors for Heart Disease
- Tips to Reduce Heart Disease Risk Factors for Women

What Women Need to Know about Risk Factors for Heart Disease

by Brenda Gandy

Addressing Women's Health Issues

The American Heart Association reported that heart disease kills an estimated 240,000 American women annually. More than five times the number of women who die from breast cancer. This disturbing fact drew the attention of Oklahoma Extension Educator Brenda Gandy, Garfield County, her community partners and Program Advisory Committee. Gandy and community partners then began communicating with State Extension Health Specialist Dr. Youmasu J. Siewe to develop and present a Women's Heart Health Forum in Enid.

The forum was designed to promote the concept of "what women need to know about heart disease". Dr. Siewe traveled to Enid, in Northwest Oklahoma as keynote speaker and spoke extensively on the issues of recognizing the risk factors of heart disease for women and the preventative measures to consider. While women cannot do anything about the



unchangeable risk factors like age, family history, race or gender, they can lower or modify the changeable risk factors. The major heart disease risk factors that can be modified or controlled, or treated were identified and discussed as follows:

Tobacco Use; High Cholesterol; High Blood Pressure; Physical inactivity; Obesity or overweight; Diabetes; Excess stress

Dr. Siewe then provided information on the effect of menopause on women's hearts and the controversial use of Hormone Replacement therapy (HRT) with the understanding that a healthcare provider should be contacted for more individualized information about hormone replacement therapy. The forum ended with a forty minute question and answer session.

The Forum was well attended by over thirty women and the local media. Enid News then followed up with a front page educational article that included a color photo. Numerous handouts were made available and a complete packet of the information was provided to volunteer lesson leaders in fifteen Garfield County, Oklahoma Home and Community Education Groups to reach an additional 167 women. Participants evaluated the program highly and expressed an appreciation for having the opportunity to hear the information and then informally ask questions of a recognized health specialist.

It was the combined contributions of the local extension staff, commu-



nity partners and State Extension Specialist that made this effort a huge success. Community partners included the Garfield County Health Department, The Enid Public Library, The Enid News, City of Enid Public Access TV and Oklahoma Home and Community Education. This was truly an example of OCES partnering with communities to "Bring the University to You". This Forum was conducted in 2003 and Gandy had since moved to Grady and Stephens Counties where she is currently working with community partners to hold a similar forum with five medical doctors participating April 28, 2004 at the Grady County Fairgrounds where over 150 participants are expected.

Tips to reduce heart disease risk factors for women

Risk factors of heart disease are conditions or behaviors that can increase a woman's chance of developing heart disease. Risk factors can also be changeable or unchangeable. While a woman cannot do anything about the unchangeable risk factors like age, family history, race or gender, she can lower or modify the changeable risk factors.

The major heart disease risk factors that are changeable or can be modified, controlled or treated are: tobacco use; high cholesterol; high blood pressure; physical inactivity; obesity or overweight; diabetes; and excess stress.

Specific tips to reduce heart disease risk factors:

- Avoid being overweight. Women who are overweight or obese have higher risks of heart disease and stroke, even if they do not have other risk factors. Obesity is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and also influences blood pressure, blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Obesity also makes women more likely to develop other chronic conditions such as diabetes. For those who are overweight and want to lose some, it is important to start a program that involves physical activity and sensible eating. Avoid weight loss programs that promise rapid results.
- Lower high blood cholesterol by eating less saturated fat (fat from

Summary of reducing risk factors for heart disease include:

- Cut the amount and kinds of fat and cholesterol in your diet.
- Stop smoking and avoid other people's tobacco smoke.
- Control high blood pressure.
- If you take birth control pills, talk with your healthcare provider about using lower-dose pills that pose less risk and could be protective of heart disease.
- Be more physically active. For example, use stairs instead of elevators!
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Take medicine if your doctor prescribes it.
- Learn to relax and find healthful ways to deal with situations you find stressful. Unhealthy responses to stress may lead to other risk behaviors like smoking and overeating.
- Get your friends and family to join you in a healthy way of life.
- Make changes slowly in your family's diet and exercise habits.
- Share heart-healthy cooking tips and recipes with friends.
- Suggest that your church, synagogue or community group hold a blood pressure or cholesterol screening.
- Find a partner to exercise with you three or four times a week.
- Turn off the TV and do something active as a family.
- Support friends and family who want to quit smoking.
- Take action in your community and workplace:
 - Ask for healthier food choices in grocery stores, restaurants and your company's vending machines or cafeteria.
 - Insist on a nonsmoking section in restaurants and other public places.
 - Request that your workplace be smoke-free.
 - Start a fitness walking club or exercise class.

Know the warning signs of heart attack and stroke and don't delay in getting professional help if you notice any of them.

animal sources) and cholesterol, maintain a healthy weight and increase your physical activity. The eating plan include: Total fat intake should be less than 30 percent of calories; Saturated fat intake should be 8 to 10 percent of

calories; Polyunsaturated fat intake should be up to 10 percent of calories; Monounsaturated fat makes up the rest of the total fat intake, up to 15 percent of total calories; Cholesterol intake should

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be less than 300 milligrams per day, sodium intake should be no more than 2400 milligrams per day, and read label and ingredient statements to know what nutrients are in a product.

- Remain physically active: the heart and lungs require vigorous activities like brisk walking, running and swimming, for 30-60 minutes, and three to four times a

week for proper health. Regular physical activity improves heart and lung fitness and helps reduce risk of heart attack and stroke. Regular physical activity also makes one to feel and look better.

- Maintain a normal blood pressure: Blood pressure should be checked at least every two years or as often as recommended by a healthcare provider. Blood pres-

sure readings are written as two numbers, such as 120/80mmHg (millimeters of mercury).

Maintain a normal blood cholesterol level. Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that is involved in the formation of plaque found in diseased arteries. A total blood cholesterol level of less than 200 mg per deciliter is desirable.