

Women and Heart Disease

Sakiliba Mines MD

Since the beginning of time women have displayed power, strength, beauty and support for their families. Isis of ancient Egypt was the matriarch, and set the stage for many generations of women to come. The truth is, women can no longer hide "beyond the mask of strength"; cardiovascular disease is responsible for over a half-million deaths in women from all races and ethnic groups. Since 1980, mortality from cardiovascular disease has declined in men significantly, but increased in women. National Institutes of Health (NIH), statistics reveal that the number of deaths of women due to heart diseases has now surpassed those of men. Sadly, research has shown that women are more likely to die of their first cardiac event.

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This loss of human lives is unacceptable in our society where we have state-of-the-art technology. So many people are dying of preventable diseases. Patients often give up because they believe that their diseases are irreversible or inevitable and only treatable by pharmaceuticals. As a result, atherosclerosis, which affects all the organs, but most devastatingly the brain, the heart, the kidneys and the lower extremities, worsens. Finally the body gives out because it is not able to function as nature intended.

Cardiac disease in women is more complex, and instead of one major blockage in an artery multiple small arteries in women go into spasm, or smaller vessels become diseased, which may be difficult to see but just as dangerous. Many times a woman's symptoms are vaguer and less localized than a man's, and heart disease is not being diagnosed until it becomes more advanced.

What are the possible causes of this epidemic of sudden heart attacks and death? Why are women often misdiagnosed or never diagnosed?

1. Women may not be taken as seriously as men when they present with symptoms related to their heart. Many times we have heard that perhaps stress is the cause or hormones are imbalanced.
2. Across America, millions of women are taking calcium for osteoporosis. Too much calcium can interfere with the absorption of other nutrients such as magnesium and may lead to more fractures. This excess calcium can go to the arteries, brain, and eyes, causing other health hazards. Without sufficient magnesium, we are creating a serious imbalance between calcium and magnesium, compounded by low minerals. The consequence of magnesium deficiency causes many conditions like panic attacks, insomnia, osteoporosis, PMS, leg cramps, and many more.

A caring doctor needs to spend more time with female patients to listen and understand the symptoms of chest discomfort, shortness of breath, dizziness, and reduced stamina to rule out heart disease.

An integrative medical doctor provides a thorough health exam and uses the latest in functional diagnostic and assessment tools to determine if there is evidence of pre-disease or borderline conditions that may be present, then treats accordingly. Because the nature of holistic medicine is to put the patient at the center of the doctor/patient relationship, an integrative doctor will spend the time necessary to listen to your concerns and try to get to the root cause of your problems. Integrative medicine, combining the best of traditional and complementary medicine, can provide therapeutic options as alternatives to pharmaceuticals.