



Heart Disease in Women: Important Facts to Know

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February is American Heart Month—every cardiologist’s favorite month to discuss heart health (and wear a lot of red). As a female physician, women’s health is incredibly important and personal to me, and I’d like to share the following facts about how cardiovascular disease impacts women.

Heart Disease in Women: What You Need to Know

More women die of heart disease than of all cancers combined.

- Heart disease accounts for 1 in 4 deaths in women, and it remains the No. 1 killer for both women and men.
- Cardiovascular diseases and stroke cause 1 in 3 women's deaths each year.
- 90 percent of women have at least one risk factor for heart disease or stroke.
- Women have a higher lifetime risk of stroke than men.
- More women than men die within a year of their first heart attack.
- 80 percent of heart disease and stroke events (likely even more) may be prevented by lifestyle changes and education.
- Cardiovascular diseases kill approximately one woman every 80 seconds.

Changing the Statistics

If there is one thing I want to contribute to my specialty over the course of my career, it’s changing the harrowing statistics on heart disease—which brings me to plant-based diets. Did you know that [a 2016 review](#) of 65,000 people found whole-food plant-based eaters are 25 percent less likely to develop ischemic heart disease compared with omnivores? And in 2017 [a large study](#) found that a healthful plant-based diet lowered the risk of coronary heart disease by 25 percent.

It is well established in the research literature that a whole-food, plant-based diet can decrease your risk of developing numerous risk factors for heart disease, including [hypertension](#) and [diabetes](#). And across [randomized trials](#), plant-based diets have been shown to dramatically lower total blood cholesterol and to lower LDL cholesterol by up to 35 percent.

This February, even if you aren’t interested in going 100

percent plant based, how about giving it a try for a week? My seven-day Heart Health Challenge begins Monday, Feb. 18. [Who’s in?](#)