



ElizGreene
Low Stress & Great Success
Heart Month Q&A

(Eliz is pronounced e-liz as in e-mail)

Q: Most women think heart disease is a man's problem or an older woman's problem, why do women of every age need to pay attention to their heart health?

A: Heart disease is the number one health risk to all adult women. While our estrogen may provide some protection in early years, "the pill" and other hormonal birth control options limit that protection. Which is why women on the pill should not smoke and be very good about controlling their other risk factors.

Q: What are the risk factors for women?

A: Risk factors fall into three categories: Ones you are born with, ones only your doctor can tell you about, and ones having to do with your lifestyle.

First, are inherited risk factors such as your age, family history of heart disease, and your ethnicity. As mentioned before, women's heart risk does increase with age, but hormonal birth control can take away some of that protection. Having close relatives with heart disease or high blood pressure increases your risk. If your family comes from Africa, Mexico, India, or are native to the Americas, Hawaii or Alaska you have a higher risk of heart disease.

The second group of risk factors are internal, and only testing will allow you to evaluate your personal risk. Every woman should know her blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. Find out the numbers, not just "it's okay" or "it's a little high."

Finally, your lifestyle has an impact on your risk. Smoking triples your risk of heart disease. Stress can increase it by 30%. Carrying more weight than your frame needs can double your risk.

The good news - small changes in your daily habits can make a big difference in your health.

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Q: What type of small changes can women make?

A: First, if you smoke, stop. It is the biggest favor you can do your body. You start reaping the benefits right away and after a year living smoke free you have reduced your risk to that of a nonsmoker.

Moving more every day can cut your risk in half. This doesn't mean a trip to the gym. Find ways to fit two or three short walks (10 minutes) into your day or use a pedometer to count your steps. Make it fun by dancing in the kitchen while making dinner, or shooting hoops with your kids.

Do something simple every day to manage your stress. When the clock reads 10:00 a.m. take a break. Sit back, close your eyes (unless you are driving) and take 10 deep breaths. You will slow your heart rate, lower your blood pressure, refresh your mind and be able to return to the task at hand energized and less stressed.

Don't Eat Boring Food: Put some color on your plate! Load up on fresh fruits in vegetables in smoothies, salads and soups and avoid overly processed foods (if it's beige or brown, put it down!).

Indulge and Don't Feel Guilty: Time spent doing things to make yourself feel better, reduce your stress, and care for your health isn't selfish - it is essential. Enjoy a glass of wine, take a walk with a friend, or close the door and put your feet up for a few minutes. You deserve it and your heart will thank you.

Q: If women want more ideas or more information, where can they find it?

A: www.EmbraceYourHeart.com has great tools, including my new book, the Busy Woman's Guide to a Healthy Heart, as well as a link to my blog which has tips and articles to help you live longer, feel better and stress less.

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