



Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W
Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Phone: (607) 547-6483
Fax: (607) 547-4385

Women and Heart Disease

Do you think heart disease only affects men? The truth is that heart disease affects women as well. In fact, women are more likely to die from a heart attack than men. Almost 39 percent of female deaths occur from coronary heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases.

“Heart disease is the leading killer of women in New York State,” said Diane Cusworth, Director of the Otsego County Dept. of Health. For women and men, the most common warning sign of a heart attack is discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and returns.

Women are more likely than men to experience some of the other warning signs, particularly shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

People often don't recognize the symptoms of a heart attack, and wait too long to seek care. Call your health care provider or dial 911 immediately if you experience any of these warning signs. If you are having a heart attack, the faster you can get to the hospital, the less damage will happen to your heart. Every second counts.

The factors that most contribute to heart disease are smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, family history and age.

“Look at your lifestyle, family history and your general health. You and your family doctor can assess your risk and make a plan to avoid potential problems. Although you can't do much about your family history or your age, you can make lifestyle changes to avoid many of the other risk factors,” Diane Cusworth said.

The Otsego County Dept of Health recommends the following preventive measures:

- **Don't smoke.** Smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke are major causes of heart disease.
- **Control your blood pressure.** Treating high blood pressure can lower your risk of heart attack and stroke. Losing weight, being physically active, and eating low fat, low sodium food will help control high blood pressure.
- **Control your cholesterol level.** If you don't know your level, ask your health care provider to check it. Healthy nutrition and physical activity are important in lowering high cholesterol levels. However, some people may also need to take medication to control cholesterol.

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Extra weight puts strain on your heart and arteries. Physical activity and eating vegetables and fruit rather than high fat food can help maintain healthy weight.
- **Be physically active.** Remember, your heart is a muscle. It needs regular physical activity to stay in shape. Even moderate physical activity, such as walking, can reduce your risk of heart disease. Try to do at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week, if not all at once, then in increments.
- **Make healthy food choices:** Choose foods low in fat and salt and increase the daily number of servings of vegetables and fruit.
- **Take care of diabetes.** If you have diabetes, regular physical activity, weight control, low-fat food and regular doctor visits are important.
- **Know your family history.** Having a father or brother with heart disease before age 55, or a mother or sister with heart disease before age 65 are signs that you may be at higher risk. Talk to your health care provider about your family history.

For more information, visit on-line at www.nyhealth.gov or call:

Otsego County Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W-Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
(607) 547-4230