

# HEALTHY LINKS

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 Member Health and Human Services Committee  
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## GO RED FOR WOMEN IN FEBRUARY!

Go Red For Women encourages you to know these five important numbers in order to take control of your heart health:

- TOTAL CHOLESTEROL
- HDL (GOOD) CHOLESTEROL
- BLOOD PRESSURE
- BLOOD SUGAR
- BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

These numbers can help women and healthcare providers determine individual risk factors for developing cardiovascular disease.

### Common Myths about Heart Disease:

**Myth: Heart disease is for men, and cancer is the real threat for women**

**Fact:** Heart disease is a killer that strikes more women than men, and is more deadly than all forms of cancer combined. While one in 31 American women dies from breast cancer each year, heart disease claims the lives of one in three. That's roughly one death each minute.

**Myth: Heart disease is for old people**

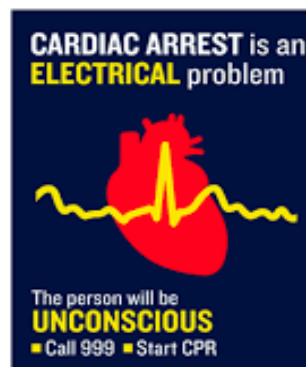
**Fact:** Heart disease affects women of all ages. For younger women, the combination of birth control pills and smoking boosts heart disease risks by 20 percent. And while the risks do increase with age, things like overeating and a sedentary lifestyle can cause plaque to accumulate and lead to clogged arteries later in life. But even if you lead a completely healthy lifestyle, being born with an underlying heart condition can be a risk factor.

### Classic Heart Attack Symptoms



**Myth: Heart disease doesn't affect women who are fit**

**Fact:** Even if you're a yoga-loving, marathon-running workout fiend, your risk for heart disease isn't completely eliminated. Factors like cholesterol, eating habits and smoking can counterbalance your other healthy habits. You can be thin and have high cholesterol. The American Heart Association recommends you start getting your cholesterol checked at age 20, or earlier, if your family has a history of heart disease. And while you're at it, be sure to keep an eye on your blood pressure at your next check-up.



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**Myth: I don't have any symptoms**

**Fact:** Sixty-four percent of women who die suddenly of coronary heart disease had no previous symptoms. Because these symptoms vary greatly between men and women, they're often misunderstood. Media has conditioned us to believe that the telltale sign of a heart attack is extreme chest pain. But in reality, women are somewhat more likely to experience shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain. Other [symptoms](#) women should look out for are dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting, pain in the lower chest or upper abdomen and extreme fatigue.

**Myth: Heart disease runs in my family, so there's nothing I can do about it**

**Fact:** Although women with a family history of heart disease are at higher risk, there's plenty you can do to dramatically reduce it. Simply create an action plan to keep your heart healthy.

Because of healthy choices and knowing the signs, more than 670,000 of women have been saved from heart disease, and 300 fewer are dying per day.

**WHAT'S STOPPING YOU FROM TAKING ACTION?****Heart Attack Warning Signs (American Heart Association)**

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense — the "movie heart attack," where no one doubts what's happening. But most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

**Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.

**Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.**

**Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.**

**Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness**

**Nausea and vomiting.**

Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, have it checked out. Minutes matter! Fast action can save lives — maybe your own. **Don't wait more than five minutes to call 9-1-1.**

**THANKFULNESS: HOW GRATITUDE CAN HELP YOUR HEALTH**

"Gratitude can have dramatic and lasting effects in a person's life. It can lower blood pressure and improve immune function... grateful people engage in more exercise, have better dietary behaviors, are less likely to smoke and abuse alcohol, and have higher rates of medication adherence," says Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at University of California-Davis and author of *The Little Book of Gratitude*.

**1. HEALTH: WHAT DID YOUR BODY DO FOR YOU TODAY?**

Did you know you take about eight million breaths a year? Your feet can take you up a mountain, your arms can hold someone you love. Take a minute to marvel at the finely tuned machinery of your body.

**2. EAT: WHAT DID YOU FEED YOUR BODY TO NOURISH YOURSELF TODAY?**

Was it an old favorite, something you made, or something new and different? If you eat three meals a day, you'll eat about a thousand meals this year! Take a minute to savor an especially yummy meal.

**3. ACTIVITY: WHAT DID YOU DO THAT REALLY ENJOYED TODAY?**

Did you give it your all at the gym or take a quiet moment while sitting in traffic to reflect? Take a minute to think back on one particularly awesome moment.

**4. RELATIONSHIP: WHO DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING?**

Is it someone who sets your heart on fire, always has a smile for you, has your back, or makes you laugh until you cry? Take a minute to smile as you think about this special person.

**5. TIME: WHAT ARE YOU DOING RIGHT NOW?**

Every single day you wake up with 24 brand new hours. The past is history, the future is a mystery, and today is a gift. That's why they call it the present! **Take a minute to be thankful for the gift of time.**