

TALKING HEART-TO-HEART ABOUT WOMEN'S

heart care

Taking Control

Heart disease is the cause of one out of every three deaths among women. Fortunately, there are things you can do to minimize this threat, says Jefferson Health cardiologist Andria Jones, DO. For starters, women of all ages should be aware of these risk factors: lack of exercise, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, unhealthy diet and tobacco use.

For a healthier diet, Dr. Jones recommends more fruits and vegetables, lean meats and fish high in omega 3 fatty acids; omega 3 can decrease triglycerides, slightly lower blood pressure, and reduce blood clotting, which can lead to stroke. Also important: avoid processed/packaged foods high in preservatives such as sodium, which carries a risk for high blood pressure.

Family Matters

Beyond our control is our family history – but we *can* heighten our awareness of its impact and take appropriate action. For example, if your mother or father had heart disease in middle age or before, there's a genetic risk factor for you.

"Whether or not you have any risk factors," says Dr. Jones, "the main times to see a cardiologist are if 1) you're experiencing chest discomfort, abdominal pain, problems breathing or swelling in your legs, and 2) your primary care physician is concerned and refers you to one. Don't put it off."

Unique risk factors for women during pregnancy are preeclampsia (high blood pressure) and eclampsia (seizures). "Women who experience these conditions run the risk of high blood pressure later in life," explains Dr. Jones. "It's important to have your blood pressure checked after delivery and then annually. Even if your blood pressure goes back to normal, your risk is still greater than most patients."

"Similarly, if you have diabetes during pregnancy but your blood sugars are normal after delivery, your risk of re-developing it eventually is very high. I usually recommend screening at least six to 12 months after delivery and at least annually after that."

Leading-Edge Treatments for Women and Men

Jefferson Health provides treatment options that can help both men and women manage heart disease and live more comfortably says Dr. Rohinton Morris, MD, Director of Jefferson Health's Division of Cardiac Surgery.

For structural heart problems, Jefferson Health offers minimally invasive procedures, such as transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR), an innovative treatment for aortic stenosis, which is caused by a narrowing of the heart valve that restricts blood from exiting the heart, and transcatheter mitral valve repair with MitraClip therapy.

"These procedures enable patients to recover and resume their normal lives faster than open surgery," says Dr. Morris. "They also present options that may not be available elsewhere in the region for those patients too ill to qualify for surgery for their coronary disease."

"But what I'm proudest of as a Jefferson Health physician is that wherever patients live, work or play, we're there with exceptional and convenient outpatient and inpatient heart care. We're in South Jersey, Center City, and the Philadelphia Suburbs as well as the Northeast and South Philly."



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