



## All Women Should Know These Heart Disease Risk Factors



While heart disease is sometimes referred to as a “man’s disease,” it actually remains the number one killer of women in the United States, taking responsibility for about one in every four female deaths each year.

Despite this widespread impact, most women are not aware they are at risk, and are relatively uneducated about what factors can increase their risk. Scarier still, some women may not exhibit any symptoms until it is too late – and they experience the onset of a severe heart-related episode.

All women should stay informed about these traditional risk factors for heart disease:

- Age 55 or older
- Family history of heart disease
- Have high blood pressure and/or high cholesterol
- Overweight and/or not very physically active
- Poor diet and/or excessive alcohol use
- Diabetes
- Smoking

When a person’s blood vessels start to narrow or become blocked, they have developed heart disease. This condition can lead to a heart attack, heart failure, an arrhythmia, or stroke if left untreated.

Women can also face additional risk factors during specific life events:

**PREGNANCY:** If pregnancy-induced high blood pressure or gestational diabetes is experienced, risk of future heart complications is increased.

**BREAST CANCER THERAPIES:** Some chemotherapy drugs and radiation therapies used to treat breast cancer may increase risk of heart disease.

**STRESS AND DEPRESSION:** A woman’s heart reacts differently to stress and depression compared to a man’s, which can lead to symptoms of heart disease.

### Now that you know the risks, how can you control them?

You can lower your chance of heart disease by taking simple steps. You may not be able to control some factors—such as age and genetics—but you should feel empowered to face the others with confidence. Work with your physician to build a heart healthy diet plan (which includes minimal to moderate alcohol consumption); discuss what level of physical activity you can start doing safely to directly benefit your heart; and coordinate support to smoking cessation resources, which are often available for free.

Calcium scoring may also be helpful for select individuals who do not have typical risk factors, but rather a family history that is significant for coronary artery disease (or heart attacks). Coronary artery calcium scores can be used to direct preventative measures—such as being placed on a statin medication or how aggressive to manage your medications.

Women who are at high risk or have not had blood work done in a long time, should visit a physician for a heart health checkup immediately. Do not wait for symptoms show, since high blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure can lead to heart disease before they cause any visible symptoms.



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH DR. NISHA GANDHI, CALL ST. MARY COMPREHENSIVE CARDIOLOGY AT 215.750.7818.

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Residents in the Feasterville area will soon boast a new medical hub featuring 26 exam rooms and more than 14,000 square feet of space courtesy of the St. Mary Health Feasterville outpatient center—set to open in June 2019. A full suite of services will be offered, including:

- **SPECIALTY CARE.** Cardiology, obstetrics and gynecology, orthopedics, and urology.
- **WALK-IN CLINIC AND AFTER-HOURS CARE.** Now stay close to home to get the care you need, when you need it.
- **PRIMARY CARE.** Access physicians and nurse practitioners for all of your wellness exams and other routine check-ups. Family medicine physicians will be available to care for the diverse needs of you and your family.

This location is an extension of St. Mary Medical Center located in Langhorne, which means all providers will have access to your medical chart—giving you the ultimate in care continuity.

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