

WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

South Asians have a three to five times greater risk of dying from heart disease or stroke than other populations. The Heart and Stroke Foundation funds education and research to help South Asian families reduce their risk and live longer, healthier lives. Learn more at heartandstroke.ca/southasian

HEALTHY HEARTS BEGIN AT HOME.™



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The face of heart disease is changing. There was a time when it was considered “a man’s disease.” In Canada, stroke kills 45 percent more women than men. Women are also 16 percent more likely to die after a heart attack than men. Rates of heart disease are as high among South Asian women as they are among men. South Asian women are also at a higher risk of heart disease than any other ethnicity in North America. In fact, women are more likely to die of a heart attack or a stroke than men.

What explains the increased risk among women? Well, women are less likely to recognize symptoms of heart disease and stroke. They’re also less likely to seek treatment when they should and less likely to receive prompt and proactive treatment from their healthcare provider. Women also have gender specific risks such as pregnancy and menopause.

The good news is that you as a woman you can do something about your heart health. You can take steps to reduce your unique risks of heart disease and stroke starting today! It’s a matter of becoming aware of the risk, the warning signs, prevention and treatment options. It’s time to “heart” your heart.

Visit the following sites for more information on heart and stroke, as well as healthy eating information:
www.thehearttruth.ca
www.takepressuredown.ca;
www.heartandstroke.ca/southasian;
 and the nutritionist-developed *Healthy Weights* program at:
www.heartandstroke.ca

The Heart Truth: The Changing Face of Heart Disease

BY NEERA CHAUDHARY



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Unique Lifecycle

Issues for Women

Unique Issues for Women

Women have some unique lifecycles related to their bodies such as pregnancy and menopause. While most of the risk factors, signs and symptoms are the same in women as they are in men, there are unique aspects to women's heart health that you should know.

Birth Control Pills (Oral Contraceptives)

Modern oral contraceptives are much safer than the forms used decades ago. In women under the age of 35 who don't smoke, contraceptive use does not increase the risk of stroke. However, in a small proportion of women, oral contraceptives increase the risk of high blood pressure and blood clots. The risk is greater if you: smoke, already have high blood pressure (especially if you are over the age of 35), have other risk factors for heart disease or stroke, or already have a blood clotting problem.

Pregnancy

Over the nine months of gestation, women may develop certain conditions that put them at higher risk of heart disease.

Pre-eclampsia is a condition that typically starts after the 20th week of pregnancy. It occurs in about seven per cent of pregnant women. It is related to increased blood pressure and protein in the mother's urine. Although there is no proven way to prevent pre-eclampsia, you may be prone to the condition if you have high blood pressure or are obese prior to becoming pregnant. Other risk factors include being younger than 20 or older than 40, are pregnant with more than one baby, or have diabetes, kidney disease, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus or scleroderma. Pre-eclampsia is treatable under the supervision of a doctor.

Gestational diabetes occurs in about 2 to 4 per cent of pregnant women. While pregnant, a woman's body must produce extra insulin because increasing levels of pregnancy hormones interfere with the body's ability to use insulin efficiently. If the woman's body can't process the additional insulin sufficiently, her blood sugar levels may rise, causing gestational diabetes. Although gestational diabetes usually disappears after the baby is delivered, it can increase the risk of the mother and baby developing diabetes later in life. Diabetes is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Menopause

During the transition to menopause, which usually occurs at about age 51, a woman's risk of heart disease and stroke increases. This is because the ovaries slowly stop producing the hormone estrogen, which has a protective effect on the heart. A menopausal woman may experience an increase in LDL or bad cholesterol, increased triglyceride levels, and may experience a decrease in HDL or good cholesterol. She may also show a tendency toward higher blood pressure. Reduced estrogen levels may also increase body fat above the waist; have harmful effects on the way blood clots; and affect the way the body handles sugar, a precursor condition to diabetes.

Good Fats for Your Heart

A lot of people don't know that not all fat is bad for your health. Certain types of fat can actually help keep your heart healthy. It is the quality and quantity of fat that is important. There are two different types of fats – good fats and bad fats. Saturated fats and trans fats are the “bad fats” because they can raise LDL cholesterol levels (‘bad’ cholesterol).

Foods high in saturated fat include fatty meats, full-fat dairy products, butter, hard margarines, lard, coconut oil, ghee (clarified butter), vegetable ghee and palm oil. Trans fat is found in partially hydrogenated margarines, deep-fried foods from fast-food outlets and many packaged crackers, cookies and commercially baked products.

Unsaturated fats are the “good fats” because they help to keep your heart healthy. Only a small amount – 30 to 45 mL or 2 to 3 tbsp – of unsaturated fat is recommended each day (also known as mono- and polyunsaturated fat).

Monounsaturated fats are found in olive, canola, and peanut oils, non-hydrogenated margarines, avocados and some nuts such as almonds, pistachios, cashews, pecans, and hazelnuts.

Omega-3 fats are types of polyunsaturated fat that contribute to heart health. The best sources of omega-3 fats are cold-water fish such as mackerel, sardines, herring, rainbow trout and salmon, as well as canola and soybean oils, omega-3 eggs, flaxseed, walnuts, pecans and pine nuts. Here are some simple ways to include ‘good fats’ in your diet:

- **Snack on a small handful of nuts like walnuts, almonds, pecans or pine nuts – remember to choose salt-free nuts!**
- **Eat fish at least twice a week – choose fish like mackerel, sardines, herring, rainbow trout or salmon**
- **Use monounsaturated oils for cooking instead of ghee or butter**
- **Add ground flaxseed to the wholegrain flour you use to make roti / chappati (1 Tbsp for 2 rotis) Remember that since all fats are calorie-heavy, you'll need to use even the healthier ones in moderation. A healthy eating pattern includes between 20% to 35% of your day's calories from fat. For women, this works out to 45 to 75 grams of fat a day, and for men, 60 to 105 grams of fat a day.**

Good Fats

and Bad Fats



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Risk Assessment

The Heart Truth Quiz

What's Your Risk?

1. Do you have a relative who had a heart attack or stroke before age 65, or a male relative who had a heart attack or stroke before age 55? **Yes** **No**
2. Are you between the ages of 40 and 60? **Yes** **No**
3. Do you belong to one of these ethnicities: South Asian; African or Caribbean; First Nations, Inuit or Métis? **Yes** **No**
4. Do you exercise less than 30 minutes per day? **Yes** **No**
5. Do you smoke? **Yes** **No**
6. Is your body mass index (BMI) more than 25?
BMI = weight (kg) height (m²) **Yes** **No**
7. Do you have more than two drinks per day? **Yes** **No**
8. Do you eat high-fat foods such as fast foods, fried foods, cookies, chips or cake more than once a week? **Yes** **No**
9. Do you feel stressed or anxious most of the time? **Yes** **No**
10. Do you have diabetes? **Yes** **No** **Don't Know**
11. Do you have high cholesterol? **Yes** **No** **Don't Know**
12. Do you have high blood pressure?
Yes **No** **Don't Know**
13. Are you taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT)?
Yes **No** **Don't Know**
14. Are you, or have you ever been pregnant?
Yes **No** **Don't Know**
15. Do you use oral contraception (birth control pills)?
Yes **No** **Don't Know**

Your Results

Now count up how many times you answered "Yes". Check below to see where your risk falls: See "Don't Know" if you answered any questions this way.

None

Congratulations! Your family history, current health and lifestyle choices have you at a low risk for heart disease and stroke. Continue with

your healthy lifestyle choices, which are protective factors against heart disease and stroke.

1 - 4

Caution. You have a MODERATE number of risk factors for heart disease and stroke. You can lower your score by changing lifestyle risk factors that you can control like eating a healthy diet, exercising more, or

quitting smoking. For those you can't control - like ethnicity, family history, and chronic conditions - talk to your doctor about your risks.

5 or More

Attention. You have MAJOR number of risk factors for heart disease and stroke. You can lower your score by changing lifestyle risk factors that you can control like eating a healthy diet,

exercising more, or quitting smoking. For those you can't control - like ethnicity, family history, and chronic conditions - talk to your doctor about your risks.

Don't Know

If you answered "Don't Know" to any of the questions you should talk to your doctor to discuss if you should be tested for these conditions.



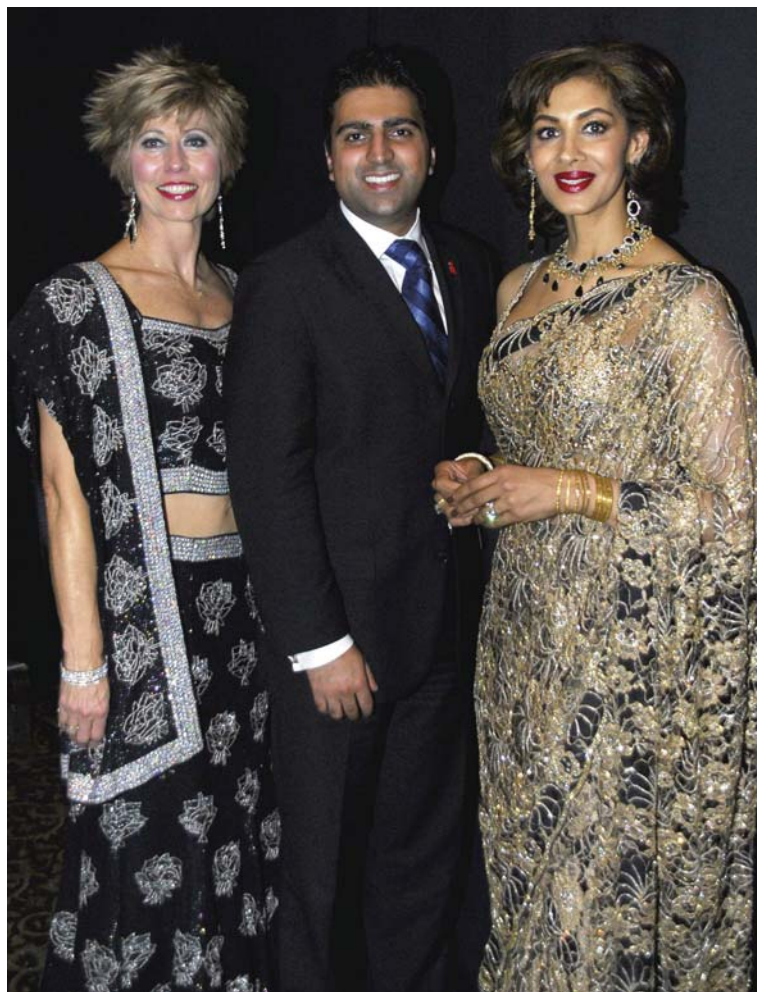
The Heart Truth Can Save Women's Lives

Heart disease and stroke kill more women than any other disease and South Asian women are at a greater risk. The Heart Truth is that one in three women die of heart disease or stroke, but women can reduce their risk by as much as 80 per cent by making lifestyle changes and taking action to improve their health, including:

- **Staying smoke free or quitting smoking - while smoking is an addiction and quitting may be difficult, with help and a plan, it may become easier.**
- **Exercising and eating right – 30 minutes of exercise and 7 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit each day plus limited consumption of saturated and trans fat and sodium puts women on the right track.**
- **Knowing, controlling, and talking to their doctor about their blood pressure and cholesterol levels. For some women, medication may be required.**



Campaign



(L-R) HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION OF BC & YUKON PRESIDENT & CEO, BOBBE WOOD, POSES WITH HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION OF CANADA CHAIR, IRFHAN RAWJI, AND TELEVISION PERSONALITY, MONICA DEOL

The Heart Truth

campaign aims to raise awareness among women of ways to reduce their risk of heart disease

and stroke, and give them the tools they need to protect themselves. The campaign invites you to share your heart and get involved. You can help by simply sharing The Heart Truth with other women and encouraging them to make lifestyle changes and take action to improve their health, such as quitting smoking, becoming more active and eating a healthier diet. We invite you to explore, learn and become a Heart Truth leader in your community!

www.thehearttruth.ca



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