For Women: The FDA Gives Tips to Prevent Heart Disease

ore women die from heart disease than from any other cause—a staggering one in four American women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But you can take action now to help prevent problems. Resources from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration can help women of all ages learn how to use FDA-approved drugs and devices safely to prevent and treat heart disease.

The FDA offers fact sheets, videos, and other webbased tools to teach you not only about heart disease, but also conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure, which can increase a woman's heart disease risk.

The FDA also created the "Heart Health for Women" site to connect women to FDA resources to support heart-healthy living. Visit the website at: *www.fda.gov/womenshearthealth*.

"The risk of heart disease increases for everyone as they age," explains FDA cardiologist Shari Targum, M.D., M.P.H. "For women, the risk goes up after menopause, but younger women can also develop heart disease."

But remember you can fight back. "I encourage women of all ages to look to the FDA for resources to help them reduce their risk for heart disease and make informed decisions about their health," says Marsha Henderson, director of the Office of Women's Health at the FDA.

Tips to Reduce Your Risk

Heart disease can lead to serious or fatal health issues such as a heart attack or stroke. But you can take steps to reduce your chances of a problem. Even small changes can help. A healthy heart needs a healthy diet, which includes eating a variety of fruits or vegetables each day.

Manage current health conditions.

Diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol can increase your risk for heart disease. Talk to your health care provider to confirm the best treatment plan.

Recognize symptoms of a heart attack in women—and call 9-1-1 if needed.

Symptoms in women can be different than those in men and include shortness of breath, nausea, and an ache or The Nutrition Facts label can tell you key information about the packaged foods you eat, and it includes details about serving sizes and nutrients like fat and sugar.

feeling of tightness in the chest, arm, neck, jaw or abdomen. "If you have these symptoms and suspect you're having a heart attack, call 9-1-1," says Targum.

Do regular physical activity and maintain a healthy weight.

You don't need to complete all activity at one set time and it's okay if you're not a fan of the gym. "Walking may be one easy way to start," says Targum. "Talk to your health care provider about how much activity is right for you."

Make heart-healthy food choices.

"For example, you can eat fruits and vegetables with each meal—and limit saturated fat and added sugars," says Targum, who also emphasizes a focus on whole grains. And if you choose to eat meats, choose the leanest cuts available and prepare them in healthy ways. The Nutrition Facts label can tell you key information about the packaged foods you eat, and it includes details about serving sizes and nutrients like fat and sugar. You can check with your health care provider to confirm the food choices best for you.

Know daily use of aspirin is not right for everyone.

Talk with a health care professional before you use aspirin as a way to prevent heart attacks.

If you smoke, try to quit.

Check out the FDA's website to learn more about medicines to help you quit: https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ ByAudience/ForWomen/ucm118667.htm.

Talk to a health professional about whether you can participate in a clinical trial for a heart medication or procedure.

A clinical trial is a research study that involves human volunteers. You can visit the FDA's Women in Clinical Trials page to learn more:

https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ByAudience/ ForWomen/ucm118508.htm.

Menopause and Heart Health

"Menopause does not cause heart disease," says Targum. "But the decline in estrogen after menopause may be one of several factors in the increase in heart disease risk."

Other risks, such as weight gain, may also increase around the time of menopause.

Hormone therapy can be used to treat some of the problems women have during menopause. "However, the American Heart Association recommends against using post-menopausal estrogen hormone replacement therapy to prevent heart disease," says Targum.

Make a Plan, Take Action

Work with your health care team to make a plan for your heart health. No matter what routine you choose, make sure to keep a list of your medicines and supplements and bring it with you to all of your appointments. Also talk to your health care provider if you have any questions.

December 22, 2017

For more consumer health information, visit www.fda.gov/consumer