



By Keith Jones,
Scottsdale Healthcare

Dear Mom, Take Care of Your Heart!

MAY MEANS MOTHER'S DAY—a day to celebrate that very special person who is near and dear to your heart. But what about *her* heart?

If your mother is like many women, she's too busy taking care of others to take care of herself and her health. Perhaps you find yourself in the same boat. If so, experts strongly suggest that you reconsider.

"Women need to recognize that heart disease is the greatest risk for their health. It's their No. 1 killer. The risk of dying from cardiovascular disease is exponentially higher than the risk of dying from breast cancer and twice as high as the risk of dying from all other cancers combined," says Scottsdale Healthcare cardiologist Karen Stark, M.D.

According to Dr. Stark, heart attack symptoms can be different for men and women. Often, women who are having a heart attack complain of more subtle symptoms such as fatigue, shortness of breath and jaw pain rather than the tremendous chest or arm pain most often associated with heart attacks.

That doesn't mean a woman having a heart attack won't have chest pain, but if they do, they may notice it while they're at rest. By comparison, men having a heart attack typically will experience chest pain when they're active or exercising.

There are other differences between the sexes when it comes to heart health. For example,

Cancer Program Earns Top Marks

The Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons has granted Accreditation with Commendation to the cancer program at Scottsdale Healthcare. Included in the accreditation are the Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center at Scottsdale Healthcare, Scottsdale Healthcare Shea Medical Center and Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn Medical Center.

Accreditation with Commendation is awarded to top cancer programs demonstrating the highest levels of cancer clinical services, research, community outreach, quality improvement, leadership and data management, according to the Chicago-based Commission on Cancer.

Free resources are available from Scottsdale Healthcare for anyone with questions about cancer (480-323-1255; ccc@shc.org). For literature from the cancer resource center or information about clinical trials, call 480-323-1339; visit clinicaltrials@shc.org.

women tend to have:

- Higher systolic blood pressure — The top number of your blood pressure reading, systolic blood pressure indicates the maximum pressure exerted when your heart contracts.
- Higher triglyceride levels — Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in the bloodstream. Too much of this fat can contribute to hardening and narrowing of the arteries.
- Higher levels of high-sensitive C-reactive protein (hsCRP) — This is a marker for inflammation and increased acute risk for heart disease.

All of these are risk factors for heart disease, along with high cholesterol, vascular disease, diabetes, obesity and smoking, according to Dr. Stark.

She notes there are also differences between men and women when it comes to the technology used to diagnose heart disease. Stress tests and nuclear medicine tests are not as sensitive for women as they are for men.

Know Your Numbers

Recognizing the need for women to safeguard their health, Scottsdale Healthcare is conducting research to improve the screening and diagnosing of women's heart problems, says Dr. Stark, who is medical director of the hospital's Women's Heart Health program.

Calling the program "progressive," she notes that it includes personalized heart health evaluations with a cardiac nurse practitioner.

The one-on-one evaluations take 45 minutes and include a check of the fasting lipid profile, glucose and blood pressure. The waist circumference is measured and the body mass index is calculated. The cardiac nurse practitioner also assesses the person's 10-year risk of having a heart attack.

"Women should know their numbers, including blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol and waist circumference and discuss these with their physician," says Dr. Stark, who also encourages women to exercise, avoid tobacco and eat healthy—the same advice many mothers give to their loved ones! ■

Scottsdale Healthcare's personalized heart health evaluations are done at the Women's Diagnostic Center at Scottsdale Healthcare Shea Medical Center, 9003 E. Shea Blvd. You must fast 10 hours prior to your appointment but can drink water. The cost is \$20. To schedule your personalized heart health evaluation, call 480-882-4636.

Keith Jones is the public relations director for Scottsdale Healthcare.