

Five ways women can cut their heart attack risk

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(HealthDay)—Heart disease is the leading killer of American women,

but lifestyle changes can reduce the risk, a heart expert says.

An estimated 43 million women in the United States have [heart disease](#), but many don't know it, according to Dr. Mary Ann McLaughlin. She's medical director of the Mount Sinai Health System's Cardiac Health Program in New York City.

As part of American Heart Month in February, McLaughlin describes how women can protect themselves:

- Starting 10 years after menopause, women should ask about a [stress test](#) if they have a family history of heart disease or are obese. Doctors also recommend a stress test if you want to start a vigorous exercise program or if you have chest pressure or shortness of breath when walking uphill.
- Reduce [emotional stress](#) levels through exercise, meditation or yoga. Emotional stress is a bigger heart risk factor in women than in men.
- Know the symptoms of a heart attack—which differ from those in men—and include nausea, jaw pain, shortness of breath and extreme fatigue.
- Limit alcohol use. While some alcohol can boost good cholesterol, too much can lead to an enlarged heart, [heart rhythm disorders](#) and increased risk of stroke.
- During airline flights, drink plenty of water and move your legs as much as possible to reduce the risk of blood clots.

Heart disease is also the leading cause of death for men in the United States. About 610,000 people a year die of heart disease, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [heart disease prevention](#).

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