

Severity of menopause symptoms could help predict heart disease

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Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in women. A study of 138 menopausal women examined the association of mood, symptoms, and quality of life measures with the key markers of vascular aging, a major risk factor for the development of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

It's no secret that the menopause transition is marked with a number of [adverse health effects](#), including hot flashes and depression to vascular aging, which is typically seen as artery stiffening and endothelial dysfunction. With these problems all occurring around the same time in a woman's life, the authors of this latest study sought to determine whether menopause symptoms and depression are related to CVD.

The results, as reported in the article "Vascular dysfunction across the stages of the menopausal transition is associated with menopausal symptoms and quality of life," confirmed that. Across the stages of menopause, arterial stiffening and vascular dysfunction were associated with more frequent and severe menopause symptoms and a lower quality of life. No association, however, was found with depressive symptoms.

Previous studies have shown an especially strong link between hot flashes and increased cardiovascular risk and mortality. In this study, the frequency, but not severity, of [hot flashes](#) was specifically associated with greater arterial stiffening and reduced endothelial function.

"Perimenopausal and early [menopausal women](#) are more vulnerable to increased risk of [cardiovascular disease](#)," says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director. "With fluctuating and then declining estrogen during the [menopause transition](#), it is important to monitor mood, blood pressure, lipids, blood sugars, and body composition because of the increased risk of abdominal fat. Healthy eating and exercise are encouraged, with individualized discussion about benefits and risks of hormone therapy."

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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