

Web tool prioritizes health risks for postmenopausal women

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A web-based calculator that helps middle-aged women predict their risks of conditions that become more likely with age has been developed by public health, medical and computer science experts from throughout the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

Led by physician John Robbins of UC Davis Health, the team's risk-prediction calculator is unique in that it accounts for multiple [health conditions](#) at once, rather than one at a time. It also identifies the changing probability of those conditions over time.

"It gives women and their physicians a sense of what to focus on," Robbins said. "Most are concerned about breast cancer and, of course, they absolutely should be. But if your history and lifestyle indicate that your greatest risk is [heart disease](#), that should be your number one concern."

Based on WHI data

The calculator is based on data from the Women's Health Initiative (WHI), a long-term study of more than 160,000 diverse U.S. women aged 50 to 79. WHI's comprehensive demographic, lifestyle, [medical history](#) and health outcomes information has supported groundbreaking studies focused on improving care for postmenopausal women.

Robbins previously used the data to study how genetically derived

ancestry affects disease risk. He also was principal investigator for the UC Davis WHI site.

A comparison of likely risks

The result of his current WHI-based study is an interactive, web-based calculator that, after answering about 35 to 50 questions related to current and past health and [family history](#), shows a woman's probability of experiencing [heart attack](#), stroke, hip fracture, or breast, lung or colorectal cancer within 5, 10 or 15 years.

The risk of one disease is always relative to the risks of another, and our tool accounts for those competing risks," Robbins said. "The goal is to help women stop worrying too much about health risks that aren't likely to be factors for them and then address the ones that are."

More information: Haley Hedlin et al, Development of a comprehensive health-risk prediction tool for postmenopausal women, *Menopause* (2019). [DOI: 10.1097/GME.0000000000001411](https://doi.org/10.1097/GME.0000000000001411)

Provided by UC Davis

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