



**EMPLOYEE HEALTH INITIATIVE:**  
DJJ CELEBRATES FEBRUARY AS AMERICAN HEART MONTH  
FEBRUARY 4<sup>TH</sup> IS NATIONAL WEAR RED DAY



**National Wear Red Day is a day of action to show support for women and heart disease awareness and promote the Red Dress as a national symbol. On the first Friday in February each year, women and men across the country can unite in the national movement to give women a personal and urgent wakeup call about their risk of heart disease. Everyone can participate by showing off a favorite red dress, shirt, or tie, or by wearing the [Red Dress Pin](#).**

**What is Heart Disease?**

When you hear the term "heart disease," you may think, "That's a man's disease" or "Not my problem." But here is *The Heart Truth*<sup>®</sup>: one in four women in the United States dies of heart disease, while one in 30 dies of breast cancer. If you've got a heart, heart disease could be your problem. [Learn more about heart disease.](#)

**What Are the Risk Factors for Heart Disease?**

An astonishing 80 percent of women ages 40 to 60 have one or more risk factor for heart disease. Having one or more risk factors dramatically increases a woman's chance of developing heart disease because risk factors tend to worsen each other's effects. In fact, according to research compiled by the NHLBI, having just one risk factor doubles your chance of developing heart disease.

Whatever a woman's age, she needs to take action to protect her heart health. Heart disease can begin early, even in the teen years, and women in their 20s and 30s need to take action to reduce their risk of developing heart disease. Yet among U.S. women ages 18 and older, 17.3 percent are current smokers, 51.6 are overweight (BMI of 25 or greater), 27 percent have hypertension, 35 percent have high cholesterol, and 53 percent do not meet physical activity recommendations. African American and Hispanic women, in particular, have higher rates of some risk factors for heart disease and are disproportionately affected by the disease compared to white women. More than 80 percent of midlife African American women are overweight or obese, 52 percent have hypertension, and 14 percent have been diagnosed with diabetes. Some 83 percent of midlife Hispanic women are overweight or obese, and more than 10 percent have been diagnosed with diabetes. [Learn more about the risk factors of heart disease.](#)

**How Do I Find Out if I Am at Risk for Heart Disease?**

Some women believe that doing just one healthy thing will take care of all their heart disease risk. For example, they may think that if they walk or swim regularly, they can still smoke and stay fairly healthy. This is wrong. To protect your heart, it is vital to make changes that address each risk factor you have. [Find out how to lower heart disease risk.](#)

A damaged heart can damage your life by interfering with enjoyable activities and even your ability to do simple things, such as taking a walk or climbing steps. Heart disease cannot be "cured." It is a lifelong condition—once you get it, you'll always have it.

Fortunately, it's a problem you can do something about. Find out your risk for heart disease and take steps to prevent and control it. Talk to your doctor to get more answers. Start taking action today to protect your heart. By doing just 4 things—eating right, being physically active, not smoking, and keeping a healthy weight—you can reduce your risk of heart disease by as much as 82 percent. Visit *The Heart Truth's* [tools](#) and [resources](#).

The first step toward heart health is becoming aware of your own personal risk for heart disease. Some risks, such as smoking cigarettes, are obvious: every woman knows whether or not she smokes. But other risk factors, such as high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol, generally don't have obvious signs or symptoms. So you'll need to gather some information to create your personal "heart profile."

**You and Your Doctor: A Heart Healthy Partnership**

A crucial step in determining your risk is to see your doctor for a thorough checkup. Your doctor can be an important partner in helping you set and reach goals for heart health. But don't wait for your doctor to mention heart disease or its risk factors. Many doctors don't routinely bring up the subject with women patients. Here are some tips for establishing good, clear communication between you and your doctor:

**Speak up.** Tell your doctor you want to keep your heart healthy and would like help in achieving that goal. Ask questions about your chances of developing heart disease and how you can lower your risk. (See "[Questions To Ask Your Doctor](#)" on page 15 of [The Healthy Heart Handbook for Women](#).) Also ask for tests that will determine your personal risk factors. (See "[Check It Out](#)" (PDF, 46K) on page 16 of [The Healthy Heart Handbook for Women](#).)



## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES

**Keep tabs on treatment.** If you already are being treated for heart disease or heart disease risk factors, ask your doctor to review your treatment plan with you. Ask: Is what I'm doing in line with the latest recommendations? Are my treatments working? Are my risk factors under control? If your doctor recommends a medical procedure, ask about its benefits and risks. Find out if you will need to be hospitalized and for how long, and what to expect during the recovery period.

**Be open.** When your doctor asks you questions, answer as honestly and fully as you can. While certain topics may seem quite personal, discussing them openly can help your doctor find out your chances of developing heart disease. It can also help your doctor work with you to reduce your risk. If you already have heart disease, briefly describe each of your symptoms. Include when each symptom started, how often it happens, and whether it has been getting worse.

**Keep it simple.** If you don't understand something your doctor says, ask for an explanation in simple language. Be especially sure you understand how to take any medication you are given. If you are worried about understanding what the doctor says, or if you have trouble hearing, bring a friend or relative with you to your appointment. You may want to ask that person to write down the doctor's instructions for you.

### Menopausal Hormone Therapy and Heart Disease

Menopausal hormone therapy once seemed the answer for many of the conditions women face as they age. It was thought that hormone therapy could ward off heart disease, osteoporosis, and cancer, while improving women's quality of life. But beginning in July 2002, findings emerged from clinical trials that showed this was not so. In fact, long-term use of hormone therapy poses serious risks and may increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. The findings come from the Women's Health Initiative (WHI), launched in 1991 to test ways to prevent a number of medical disorders in postmenopausal women. It consists of a set of clinical studies on hormone therapy, diet modification, and calcium and vitamin D supplements; an observational study; and a community prevention study.

The two hormone therapy clinical studies were both stopped early because of serious risks and the failure to prevent heart disease. Briefly, the estrogen-plus-progestin therapy increased women's risk for heart attacks, stroke, blood clots, and breast cancer. These risks diminished after stopping estrogen-plus-progestin. Estrogen-plus-progestin also doubled the risk of dementia and did not protect women against memory loss. However, the therapy had some benefits: It reduced the risk for colorectal cancer and bone fractures. Estrogen-alone therapy increased the risk for stroke and venous thrombosis (blood clot, usually in one of the deep veins of the legs). It had no effect on heart disease and colorectal cancer, and an uncertain effect on breast cancer. Estrogen alone gave no protection against memory loss, and there were more cases of dementia in those who took the therapy than those on the placebo, although the increase was not statistically significant. Estrogen alone reduced the risk for bone fractures.

While questions remain, the findings make possible some advice about using hormone therapy: Estrogen alone or with progestin should not be used to prevent heart disease. Talk with your doctor about other ways of preventing heart attack and stroke, including lifestyle changes and medicines such as cholesterol-lowering statins and blood pressure drugs.

- If you are considering using menopausal hormone therapy to prevent osteoporosis, talk with your doctor about the possible benefits weighed against your personal risks for heart attack, stroke, blood clots, and breast cancer. Ask your doctor about alternative treatments that are safe and effective in preventing osteoporosis and bone fractures.
- Do not take menopausal hormone therapy to prevent dementia or memory loss.
- If you are considering menopausal hormone therapy to provide relief from menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, talk with your doctor about whether this treatment is right for you. WHI findings confirm that menopausal hormone therapy relieves menopausal symptoms. At the average age of menopause the absolute risks (numbers) of heart attack, stroke, and blood clots are low and little affected by short-term menopausal hormone therapy. The current U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommendation for menopausal hormone therapy is that it should be used at the lowest dose for the shortest period of time to reach treatment goals.
- And remember: Your risk for heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, and other conditions may change as you age. So review your health regularly with your doctor. New treatments that are safe and effective may become available. Stay informed.

**If You Have Heart Disease:** Menopausal hormone therapy was once thought to lower the risk of heart attack and stroke for women with heart disease. But research now shows that women with heart disease should not take it. Menopausal hormone therapy can involve the use of estrogen alone or estrogen plus progestin. For women with heart disease, estrogen alone will not prevent heart attacks, and estrogen plus progestin increases the risk for heart attack during the first few years of use. Estrogen plus progestin also increases the risk for blood clots, stroke, and breast cancer.

### Heart Health Tools

**Learn the signs of a heart attack and stroke, your risk factors, and how to connect with others to improve your heart health with these tools.**





**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE  
OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES**

**Signs of Heart Attack**

If you or someone you know shows signs of heart attack or stroke, call 9-1-1 right away. An Emergency Medical Services (EMS) team can begin treatment when it arrives. That means treatment can begin sooner than it would if the patient arrived at the hospital by car. What's more, the EMS team is also trained to revive someone whose heart has stopped, which saves hundreds of lives each year. If you have symptoms and you can't access EMS, ask someone to drive you to the hospital immediately. Don't drive yourself, unless there's just no other option.

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, causing someone to gasp dramatically, clutch her heart and drop to the ground. No one has any doubts about what's happening. But most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often the people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help.

**Here are some signs a heart attack may be happening:**

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. This feeling may occur with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs of discomfort. These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

If you or someone you are with has chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other signs, don't wait longer than five minutes before calling 9-1-1 for help.



**Prevention**

**Heart Healthy at Any Age:** Heart disease can affect women of any age. That's why it's so important to start heart-healthy habits right now. Choose from the age groups below to get targeted health advice.

**In Your 20s:** It's never too early to start taking care of your health. Find out how you can live heart healthy in your 20s by clicking on any of the links below.

|                                 |                          |                           |                                      |                                   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Prevention Tips</a> | <a href="#">Eat Well</a> | <a href="#">Be Active</a> | <a href="#">Watching Your Weight</a> | <a href="#">Visit Your Doctor</a> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

**In Your 30s:** Life is a balancing act between your friends, family, and yourself, but your health should be your top priority. Learn how to be heart healthy in the areas below.

|                                 |                          |                           |                                      |                                   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Prevention Tips</a> | <a href="#">Eat Well</a> | <a href="#">Be Active</a> | <a href="#">Watching Your Weight</a> | <a href="#">Visit Your Doctor</a> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

**In Your 40s:** It's more important than ever to listen to your body and make healthy life choices now that will benefit you in the long run. Make changes today to improve your health using the information below.

|                                 |                          |                           |                                      |                                   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Prevention Tips</a> | <a href="#">Eat Well</a> | <a href="#">Be Active</a> | <a href="#">Watching Your Weight</a> | <a href="#">Visit Your Doctor</a> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

**In Your 50s:** Whether you're starting a new career, sending kids to college, or even retiring, your body is changing and those changes can affect your heart. Learn more here.

|                                 |                          |                           |                                      |                                   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Prevention Tips</a> | <a href="#">Eat Well</a> | <a href="#">Be Active</a> | <a href="#">Watching Your Weight</a> | <a href="#">Visit Your Doctor</a> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

**In Your 60s+:** Heart attacks are much more likely to occur in women 10 years after menopause, but you have the power to reduce your risk by living heart-healthy using the below guide.

|                                 |                          |                           |                                      |                                   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Prevention Tips</a> | <a href="#">Eat Well</a> | <a href="#">Be Active</a> | <a href="#">Watching Your Weight</a> | <a href="#">Visit Your Doctor</a> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

**Reduce High Blood Pressure!**

High blood pressure (or hypertension) makes the heart work harder than normal. This makes both the heart and arteries more prone to injury. High blood pressure raises the risk of having a heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, eye damage,



## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES

heart failure and atherosclerosis (fatty buildups in the arteries). [Learn more](#) about blood pressure, such as [why you should care](#), [what you can do about it](#), and how you can track it.

### Stop Smoking!

Smoking is the most preventable cause of death in the United States. If you smoke cigarettes (or cigars), you have a higher risk of illness and death from heart attack, stroke and other diseases. These include lung, mouth and throat cancers; chronic lung diseases and infections; heart failure; and peripheral vascular disease (in the legs and arms).

[Read more about smoking cessation](#)

### Get Physically Active!

If you're physically inactive you're much more likely to develop heart disease or have a stroke.

Regular, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity improves your cardiovascular fitness and helps reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke. Exercise can help control blood cholesterol, diabetes and obesity. It can also help lower blood pressure. For most healthy people, the American Heart Association recommends at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most or all days of the week to condition your heart and lungs.

### Obesity/Overweight

If you have too much body fat, especially if a lot of it is in your waist area, you're at higher risk for health problems. These include high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, high triglycerides, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Women with excess body fat are at higher risk of heart disease, even if they don't have other risk factors. Here's some advice to keep in mind:

- ❖ Try to reach a healthy weight, and stay there. To lose weight, most women should eat 1,200 to 1,500 calories a day, but not less than 1,200. Losing one to two pounds or less per week is considered a healthy weight loss. (One pound of fat equals 3,500 calories.)
- ❖ Body Mass Index (BMI) is a recommended way to estimate a person's body fat. BMI assesses your body weight relative to your height. [Calculate your BMI risk level.](#)
- ❖ Check out our [Physical Activity Chart](#). Based on your weight range, it tells you how many calories you can expect to burn off while doing many common physical activities.

### Diabetes

Diabetes most often appears in middle age and among overweight people. But it's becoming an increasing problem in children and adolescents. It affects many more women than men after age 60. Compared to women without diabetes, women with diabetes have from two to four times higher death rates from heart disease. (CDC - Women's Health - Diabetes, 9/15/06) For more information on diabetes, [visit here](#).

### Sickle Cell Disease

Sickle cell disease (also called sickle cell anemia) is a genetic disorder that mainly affects African Americans. Red blood cells are normally round, but in this disorder they become shaped like sickles. "Sickled" red blood cells are less able to carry oxygen to the body's tissues and organs. They also tend to get stuck or "clump" in small blood vessels. This can block arteries to the brain and cause a stroke.

### Other Factors That Can Affect Your Risk

- ❖ **Stress:** We all feel stress, but we feel it in different amounts and react in different ways. Too much stress over a long time, and unhealthy responses to it, may create health problems in some people. Find healthy ways to handle stress. Stop smoking, stay at a healthy weight, and eat foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium.
- ❖ **Birth Control Pills:** Many women (especially obese or older women) taking oral contraceptives experience a small but detectable increase in blood pressure; a small percentage experience the onset of frank hypertension. This is true even with modern preparations that contain low-dose estrogen.
- ❖ **Alcohol:** Drinking too much alcohol raises blood pressure, can cause heart failure and can lead to stroke. It adds calories, contributes to obesity, and makes it harder to lose weight. For women, a moderate amount of alcohol is no more one drink per day. One drink is defined as 1-1/2 fluid ounces (fl oz) of 80-proof spirits (such as bourbon, scotch, vodka, gin, etc.), 1 fl oz of 100-proof spirits, 4 fl oz of wine, or 12 fl oz of beer.
- ❖ **Illegal Drugs:** Intravenous drug abuse carries a high risk of endocarditis (infection of the heart's lining or valves) and stroke. Cocaine use has been linked to heart attacks and strokes. Illegal drugs can be fatal even in first-time users.



The Information for this Article is from the [American Heart Association](#); [Go Red For Women](#); [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#); [National Institutes of Health](#); and the [Department of Health and Human Services](#).