

## Warning signs of a heart attack in women

Chest pain or discomfort is the most common heart attack warning sign in both women and men. However, women are more likely than men to have non-chest pain symptoms, including:

-  Pain or discomfort in the arms, shoulders, back, neck or jaw
-  Indigestion
-  Shortness of breath
-  Sweatiness
-  Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
-  Extreme fatigue
-  Feeling sick (nausea or vomiting)

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, stop and rest. Tell someone how you are feeling. If your symptoms are severe, getting worse, or last longer than 10 minutes, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

## Steps to protect your heart and reduce your risk

-  Follow a heart-healthy eating pattern
-  Move more
-  Maintain a healthy weight
-  Avoid or drink less alcohol
-  Be smoke and vape free
-  Manage stress and mental wellbeing
-  Manage your blood pressure and cholesterol
-  Check your blood sugar levels

For more information, visit  
[heartfoundation.org.au](https://heartfoundation.org.au)



# Women's heart health through the life course



# Women's risk across the life course

Cardiovascular disease is an umbrella term that includes heart diseases (e.g. coronary heart disease), blood vessel disease and stroke.

Traditional risk factors for heart disease (e.g. high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, poor diet and physical inactivity) are common in both women and men.

However, women may also experience unique risk factors for cardiovascular disease that can develop throughout a woman's life course. Often women's symptoms can be overlooked, leading to poorer outcomes. It's important to know your risk factors and speak with your doctor about your heart health.



## Adolescence-young adult

Factors that may increase your long-term risk of developing cardiovascular disease can start from a young age, particularly if you experience:

- Early (age 11 and younger) or late (age 15 and older) first period
- Polycystic ovarian syndrome or other hormonal disorders
- Taking oral contraception (can increase risk of blood clots)



## Pregnancy

Some complications of pregnancy can increase a woman's risk of developing cardiovascular disease, including:

- Gestational hypertension or Preeclampsia
- Gestational diabetes
- Having a low-birth-weight baby
- Having a baby born prematurely

If you have experienced any of these, you should have annual blood pressure and/or diabetes risk checks once the baby is born.



## Menopause

During menopause, women are at greater risk of developing:

- Abnormal cholesterol levels
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar levels
- Excess body fat around the waist

Women who experience early onset menopause (45 years or younger) may have a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease. If you experience early onset menopause, consider an annual blood pressure check and regular Heart Health Checks with your doctor.



## Start a conversation with your doctor about your heart health today

If you are 45 years or older without known cardiovascular disease, schedule a Heart Health Check with your doctor to assess your risk of heart attack or stroke.

Some people may be eligible earlier, including:

- 35 years and over for people living with diabetes
- 30 years and over for First Nations peoples

Speak with your doctor if you have any of these risk factors, regardless of your age.

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