

THE HEART TRUTH<sup>®</sup>

*for Women*



**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
National Institutes of Health  
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



# THE HEART TRUTH<sup>®</sup>: SERIOUS MESSAGES ABOUT WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH

*The Heart Truth*<sup>®</sup>, sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, is a national program for women that raises awareness about heart disease and its risk factors and educates and motivates them to take action to prevent the disease. Through the program, launched in 2002, the NHLBI leads the Nation in a landmark heart health movement embraced by millions who share the common goal of better heart health for all women.

*The Heart Truth* is primarily targeted to women ages 40 to 60, the time when a woman's risk for heart disease begins to increase. However, it's never too early—or too late—to take action to protect your heart health, since heart disease develops over time and its risk factors can start at a young age—even in the teen years.

## WHAT'S A RED DRESS GOT TO DO WITH IT?

The centerpiece of *The Heart Truth* is the *Red Dress*<sup>®</sup>, which was created by the NHLBI and introduced as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness in 2002. *The Red Dress*<sup>®</sup> is a powerful red alert that inspires women to learn more about their personal risk for heart disease and take action to protect their heart health.

THE HEART TRUTH<sup>®</sup>:

# HEART DISEASE IS THE #1 KILLER OF WOMEN

*The Heart Truth*<sup>®</sup> is that heart disease is the leading cause of death and disability among women in the United States. But there's good news. You have the power to take action and lower your chance of developing heart disease and its risk factors. Start today. Make a commitment to find out your risk for heart disease and take steps toward a heart healthy lifestyle.



## Cindy's Story

The power of sisterhood enabled Cindy to transform her life and health. In February 2012, she joined Follow the Fifty, a *Heart Truth*-funded program in northeast Connecticut with her daughter. Together, along with 200 other women, they pledged to become models of heart health. In 9 months, Cindy lost 77 pounds, lowered her body mass index by 11 points, and decreased her blood pressure to 110/72. Cindy's heart health pledge has become an oath for life.



### **Take Action: Tips for Heart Health**

- Don't smoke and, if you do, quit. Talk with your health care provider about programs and products that can help you quit smoking.
- Aim for a healthy weight—it is important for a long, vigorous life.
- Get moving—make a pledge to be more physically active.
- Plan to eat heart healthy—limit saturated and *trans* fats, cholesterol, sodium (salt), and added sugars.
- Learn how to manage stress and relax.

### **Make Changes for a More Healthy Life**

- Set realistic, specific goals for a heart healthy lifestyle.
- Act on your goals—take one step at a time.
- Figure out what's stopping you from making or sticking to healthy lifestyle changes. Keeping a record of your daily food intake and physical activity may help you identify barriers and inspire you to reach your goals.
- Don't give up—get back on track when you slip up.
- Reward yourself for the gains you've made—with something you like to do, not with food.
- Make a plan to maintain your healthy lifestyle changes. Involve friends and family!

# Theresa's Story

Theresa watched her mother suffer a heart attack at age 52. Thirty years later, her mother died of a second heart attack. By changing her lifestyle, Theresa's mother prolonged her life and taught Theresa the significance of understanding her risk factors for heart disease. Theresa, who is now 60, manages her high blood pressure through regular physical activity and healthy eating. She shares the lessons she's learned with her friends and family so they also are motivated to lower their risk for the disease.

## Find Out Your Personal Risk for Heart Disease

To have a healthy heart, it is critical to know the risk factors for heart disease—that is, the behaviors or conditions that increase your chance of getting heart disease. Having just one risk factor increases your chance of developing heart disease, and your risk skyrockets with each added risk factor.

They are:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Diabetes and prediabetes
- Overweight and obesity
- Lack of physical activity
- Unhealthy diet
- Metabolic syndrome
- Family history of early heart disease
- Age (55 or older for women)
- Preeclampsia during pregnancy

Find out your personal risk for heart disease. Talk to your health care provider—ask to have your blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index, and blood glucose checked.

## NHLBI RESOURCES

The NHLBI's website, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov), and *The Heart Truth* Web pages, [www.hearttruth.gov](http://www.hearttruth.gov) (English) and [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/educational/hearttruth/espanol](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/educational/hearttruth/espanol) (Spanish), offer many interactive tools and resources for individuals and communities, including:

- Educational materials for women about heart disease
- Speaker's Kit (English and Spanish) with everything needed to make a 1-hour presentation on heart disease
- Online toolkits: *The Heart Truth*, National Wear Red Day<sup>®</sup>, and Faith-Based
- *The Heart Truth* image library, videos, digital infographics, and Web banners
- *The Heart Truth* logo usage guidelines
- Deliciously Healthy Eating—Web pages featuring healthy recipes, tools, and cooking resources: [www.healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov)
- NHLBI's Health Topics resource—featuring science-based, plain-language information related to heart, lung, and blood diseases and sleep disorders: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/by-alpha](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/by-alpha)

Printer's files are available for many NHLBI publications by contacting the NHLBI Health Information Center at [NHLBIinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov](mailto:NHLBIinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov) or **301-592-8573**.



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