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Making Women's Health a Priority

National Women's Health Week begins on Mother's Day each year. As we celebrate the women and girls in our lives this week, it is important to remind them to take care of themselves and to make their health a priority. To help improve and maintain physical and mental health, women can:

- Schedule regular medical check-ups and preventive screenings
- Get active
- Eat healthy foods
- Manage mental health, including sleep, stress, and depression
- Avoid unhealthy habits
-



Women have many unique health challenges and transitions throughout their lives, including menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause. These changes in women's bodies sometimes make it difficult to diagnose a problem or can cause the signs to be missed entirely. Learn some important warning signs from the recent studies discussed below.

Signs of Hypertension Mistaken for Menopausal Symptoms

As many as 50% of women develop high blood pressure before the age of 60, but often the symptoms are misdiagnosed. Hot flashes and heart palpitations can mistakenly be attributed to menopause or stress. When hypertension is misdiagnosed, it puts women at risk of atrial fibrillation, heart failure, and stroke.

Throughout a woman's life, her body provides clues that can help prevent cardiac events. High blood pressure and pre-eclampsia during pregnancy, pre-term labor, recurrent pregnancy loss, and gestational diabetes are warning signs that hypertension could develop when a woman reaches menopause. Other female hormone disorders, such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, uterine fibroids, hysterectomy can also be risk factors for hypertension and future cardiovascular events. If hypertension is not addressed during middle age, it is much more difficult to treat later in life.

Hormone therapy is often prescribed to alleviate unpleasant menopausal symptoms, such as night sweats and hot flashes. Before initiating hormone therapy, it is important for the practitioner to evaluate the woman's cardiovascular risk factors. Working with her health care team, a woman can help prevent heart problems and make earlier diagnoses by sharing their history of complicated pregnancies, early onset of menopause, and monitoring their own blood pressure.

<https://academic.oup.com/eurheartj/article/42/10/967/6120040>

Abdominal Fat in Menopausal Women linked to Heart Disease Risk

A recent study shows that it is not so important how much fat a woman is carrying on her body, but where she is carrying that fat. Throughout a woman's lifetime, it is important to monitor waist circumference in addition to weight and body mass index (BMI) during regular health care appointments. As women approach and go through menopause, hormonal fluctuations and other environmental factors can cause weight gain. Women accumulating excess abdominal fat during menopause puts them at greater risk of heart disease even if they maintain a healthy weight. The researchers found that abdominal fat accumulation accelerated within two years of the woman's last period and then continued to gradually increase after the menopausal transition. For every 20% increase in abdominal fat, the thickness of the carotid artery increased by 2%. Our pharmacist can discuss healthy lifestyle choices and other therapeutic options with you and your medical practitioner.

https://journals.lww.com/menopausejournal/Abstract/9000/Abdominal_visceral_adipose_tissue_over_the.96997.aspx

Our pharmacist can play an important role in a woman's health care team. Let us know how we can help you or the women you care about!

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