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4 Ways to Prevent the Most Common Women's Health Problem

By Julie Lenz

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What disease kills more American women than any other?

If you answered anything except heart disease then you must read this article. According to the American Heart Association heart disease and stroke are the No. 1 and No. 3 killers of women. They are two of the many cardiovascular diseases that kill nearly 500,000 women each year. That's more than the next seven causes of death combined, including all forms of cancer. But there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

1. Get your cholesterol tested every year. Many women don't know they have high cholesterol. They assume that heart disease is a man's problem. Even many doctors don't realize the risk that women have of heart disease so they fail to suggest testing.

2. Increase your weekly exercise. We now know that as little as 10 minutes of exercise three times a week can greatly reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk the dog a little bit longer each day. Get your heart pumping by dancing to your favorite

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music

while you clean the house. Walk during your lunch hour instead of eating at your desk.

3. Eat more fruits and veggies. Fruits and vegetables are low in fat and high in fiber. They contain heart healthy nutrients. Leafy greens are particularly healthy. Orange juice is high in folic acid, a nutrient known to protect the heart and prevent birth defects. Add one vegetable or fruit to every meal and you will likely double your current intake. You can make it easier by keeping prepared vegetables in the refrigerator to throw into a salad or munch on for snacks.

4. Learn about polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). PCOS affects as many as 5–10% of all women. It is one of the most common endocrine disorders and is one of the most common causes of infertility.

PCOS is a cluster of symptoms that can include: unexplained weight gain or difficulty losing weight, depression or mood swings, painful or irregular periods, absent periods, acne, hair loss, unexpected hair growth (face, arms, stomach, etc.), infertility, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and more. Untreated PCOS can lead to serious health problems such as diabetes, heart disease and endometrial cancer. Protecting your heart is easier than you might think and it will reward you every moment of every day. Take care of yourself. You are worth it!

Julie Lenz is a life coach who helps professional women cope with the effects of chronic illness. She writes the weekly e-newsletter "PCOS Success!" She is also the author of "A PCOS Daybook: Daily Meditations for Coping With Polycystic Ovary Syndrome" to be released May 2004. You can learn more at: www.pcoscoach.com

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Strike Pain Out

By Pat Murphy

Quite wrongly, many women endure pain and muscle cramps during their period believing it to be normal. But it isn't, especially those that cause excessive pain. More importantly, it could be a signal or symptom for something more serious like an infection or disease. However, menstrual pain isn't all that bad. In fact, it is an indicator of women's health. Studies have proven that women who experience menstrual pains are more fertile, as the pains are closely-linked to ovulation cycles.

Good or bad, menstrual pain is still a source of discomfort and must be relieved. Menstrual pain can occur a day before or during the actual menstruation. Usually centering on the lower abdominal muscles to the pelvic area, the pain usually spreads to the back and thighs. In other women, it can also cause chills, nausea, or fever. But since medical attention can't be had readily, educators about

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women's health have advised several methods to relieve menstrual pain.

Menstrual cramp medications are readily available in drug stores. Some can be as common as a painkiller medication like naproxen or ibuprofen. They limit or stop the release of pain signals called prostaglandin. This translates into lesser pain. As some cramps are caused by blood clots that impede the release of menstrual flow, these medications also work prevent blood clots. Also, since these medicines are non-aspirin or narcotic-based, women with allergies or even younger girls can safely take them. In addition, these medicines can be taken before or during the onset of cramps, eliminating the need to keep timetables of medicine intake. Women can also change brands if the formulation of their old brand does not work well anymore. Keep in mind to ingest one that lasts for 10–12 hours before sleeping at night. The availability of cramp medications is truly a big leap for women's health.

Regular exercise had been also proven to prevent or stop menstrual pains. Jogging, brisk walking, and other varieties of physical activity releases toxins and stress from the body which could worsen cramping. Diet also plays a big part in alleviating cramps and menstrual pains. It is advised to avoid eating food with high salt content which is water-retentive as this could raise the bloating factor that usually accompanies cramping. Plus, being fit is a major step in keeping women's health in-check.

Lastly, it is imperative that menstrual pain or cramping that doesn't go away should be reported to the doctor immediately. It is also a good idea to get annual reproductive system check-ups such as Pap-smears. Remember that women's health are dependent on a precarious hormonal balance. It would save women much time and trouble to have diseases or irregularities checked and corrected even before they develop to full-blown diseases.

For more valuable information on Women's Health issues, please visit



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