

Heart TALK

Heart-healthy and Stroke-free Living with Dr. Amy L. Doneen, DNP, ARNP

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Thoughts from Dr. Amy 7 Crucial Steps to Protect Women's Heart Health TODAY

February marks American Heart Month, dedicated to raising awareness of the leading killer of U.S. men and women: cardiovascular disease (CVD). Although CVD is highly preventable and treatable if caught early, it claims more lives than all forms of cancer combined.

Women, in particular, are under-diagnosed and undertreated for the leading threat to their health. The Bale Doneen Method strives to change that by empowering women with the knowledge they need to take charge of their health TODAY. Follow these seven crucial steps to protect women's hearts.



- 1. Understand the facts.** Rates of CVD are rising by 1.3% annually in women ages 33 to 44. Overall, heart attacks are the leading cause of death and disability in American women. Every 34 seconds, someone in the U.S. has a heart attack and every minute, someone dies from one. Another alarming fact: 64% of women who die suddenly from a heart attack were not previously aware that they had CVD, which typically develops silently over many years. That means early detection is the key to prevention, a topic that will be discussed more fully later in this newsletter.
- 2. Be aware of female-specific Red Flags.** Alert your medical provider if you have any of these warning signs of increased CVD risk: migraine headaches with a visual aura, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), inflammatory disorders, such as psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, or lupus, a history of gestational diabetes or pre-eclampsia during pregnancy, bleeding gums, depression, a family history of heart disease, stroke or type 2 diabetes, or a resting heart rate above 75 beats per minute. Any of these Red Flags suggest that you'd benefit from a complete Bale Doneen Method assessment of your arterial health.
- 3. Why guidelines fail to protect women.** About 82% of women who have heart attacks would be classified as "low risk" under current guidelines, which base risk calculations on age, gender, systolic blood pressure (the top number), total cholesterol level, and smoking status. While these factors are important, women also need to be aware of the Red Flags listed above and what's different about women's

hearts. We (women) have smaller arteries and hearts than men do, and different signs of CVD. Before a heart attack, the most common symptoms in women are heavy sweating, nausea and shortness of breath--not chest pain. If you develop these symptoms, get immediate medical help.

- 4. Get checked for Root Causes of heart disease.** Root Causes are conditions that cause plaque buildup and inflammation in your arteries. One of the most common is insulin resistance, a root cause of 73% of heart attacks in women and of type 2 diabetes. Later in this newsletter, we'll discuss the best test to check for this disorder. A peer-reviewed Bale Doneen study published in *British Journal of Medicine* was the first to identify another treatable Root Cause of CVD: Gum disease triggered by certain periodontal bacteria.
- 5. Optimal lifestyle reduces CVD risk by 88%.** Take excellent care of your heart today by following these simple lifestyle tips: Avoid soda (both sugar-sweetened and artificially sweetened carbonated beverages). Exercise at least 22 minutes every day, with brisk walking or other aerobic workouts, after checking with your healthcare provider if these activities are right for you. Get 6 to 8 hours of sleep nightly to cut risk for diabetes, obesity and CVD.
- 6. Healthy gums help prevent heart attacks.** Your dental provider is a key member of your heart-attack-and-stroke-prevention team! Big studies show that people who take great care of their teeth and gums, with daily brushing and flossing, plus getting dental care two or more times a year, or as advised by their dental provider, live longer than those who neglect their oral health. The Bale Doneen study cited above demonstrates why dental care is so crucial: A healthy mouth helps protect arterial wellness!
- 7. Be your own best advocate.** Since current guidelines often miss women at risk for a heart attack--leaving them undiagnosed until an event occurs--it's crucial for women to partner with their healthcare provider to get optimal, personalized care. The comprehensive Bale Doneen Method has been shown in two peer-reviewed studies to prevent, stabilize and even reverse CVD!



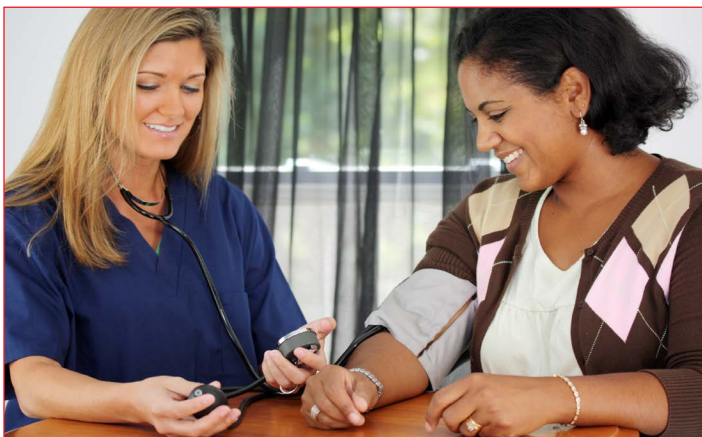
Follow the HASPC on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) for the latest news on heart health and wellness.



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What 92% of Women Don't Know About Screening for Heart Disease



Very few women are aware of the right age to start screening for heart disease, the leading cause of death in American women, according to [a new national survey](#) by Orlando Health. Despite a recommendation by the American Heart Association to begin heart screenings at age 20, only 8% of the women polled thought these crucial heart health checkups should start in their 20s. On average, women polled thought that right age to start screening was 41, two decades later.

This is a wake-up call that women shouldn't wait until they're 40 to pay attention to their heart risks. Heart disease can start to develop when women are in their teens or early 20s. Without treatment, it often silently damages arteries until it gets severe enough to cause a heart attack or stroke. Here's a look at the best ways for young women to be checked for hidden signs of heart disease, which can be prevented, stabilized or even reversed with the science-based Bale Doneen Method, as two peer-reviewed studies show.

- **Blood pressure.** Sixty-seven million Americans--about one in three adults--have high blood pressure (a reading of 140/90 or higher), and 70 million have pre-hypertension (a reading of 120/80 to 139/89). Although elevated blood pressure is the leading risk for stroke and a major contributor to heart disease, many people who have it aren't aware of their condition or don't have under control. Yet high blood pressure is highly treatable with weight loss, dietary and lifestyle changes and in many cases, medications. A large study found that for each 10 mm Hg drop in blood pressure, heart attack risk fell by 50%!

- **Cholesterol.** Most patients assume that the standard cholesterol test known as "a lipid profile" or "coronary risk panel" checks for all forms of dangerous cholesterol that raise heart attack and stroke risk. However, most healthcare providers don't test patients for a common inherited-cholesterol disorder: elevated levels of lipoprotein (a), a type of cholesterol that triples risk for heart attacks. Statins don't work well for this disorder, but it can be treated with niacin (vitamin B) and other therapies. This test only needs to be done once in a lifetime.

- **Blood sugar.** It's very common for people to be diagnosed with diabetes or insulin resistance (IR), a pre-diabetic condition, shortly after they suffer a heart attack. While these conditions may sound unrelated, actually IR is the underlying cause of 70% of heart attacks. Bale Doneen and other studies show that the most accurate screening test for IR and diabetes is the 2-hour oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT). In the time it would take you to watch a movie, you can find out if you have IR, which can often be treated or reversed with lifestyle changes.

- **Waist measurement.** A waistline measuring more than 35 inches for a woman is one of the leading indicators of metabolic syndrome (a dangerous cluster of heart attack risks). Talk to your medical provider about the best exercise-and-weight-loss plan to slim your waist--and reduce risk for heart attack, stroke and diabetes.

- **Carotid intima-media thickness (cIMT).** This noninvasive 15-minute, FDA-approved test uses ultrasound to measure the thickness of the lining of the largest artery in your neck--and can also detect arterial plaque (disease). A recent study of 13,000 people found that adding carotid thickness and plaque to traditional heart risk factors significantly improved the accuracy of 10-year risk predictions for heart attack and stroke.

- **Genetic testing.** About 50% of Americans carry one or more genes that raise risk for heart attacks. If you have a family history of heart disease or diabetes, discuss genetic testing with your medical provider. In addition, your DNA can also help guide the best diet-and-exercise plan to optimize your heart health, as discussed more fully in the bestselling Bale Doneen book, [Beat the Heart Attack Gene: The Revolutionary Plan to Prevent Heart Disease, Stroke and Diabetes](#).

Power Spinach Salad

This delicious recipe is used with permission from its creator, Tammy Strait, an author, lawyer, and athlete whose "Eat Well" blog is online at [tammystrait.com](#). Farro is an ancient wheat-derived grain with a nutty flavor rich in protein, heart-healthy fiber, and essential nutrients including magnesium and iron. A high-fiber diet lowers risk for stroke, diabetes and obesity. For this recipe, Strait uses Bob's Red Mill organic farro, available at Amazon and other stores.



Recipes for the heart

Ingredients

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1/2 cup farro, prepared according to package instructions | 1/4 cup drained and rinsed garbanzo beans (chick peas) |
| 8 ounces spinach mixed with spring greens | 2 hard-boiled eggs |
| 1 cup cottage cheese | 1 Roma tomato |

Place greens on a serving plate and add each ingredient layer on top. Sprinkle with sea salt and fresh pepper and voila! A super power-packed protein salad that is good AND good for you. Makes four servings.