

A WOMEN'S HEART



The national charity fighting heart disease and stroke, have launched a RED ALERT campaign for Irish women to let them know that as many women (5,000) as men die from cardiovascular diseases and it is important to Go Red for Women and take action to reduce your risk.

Dr Kate McGarry Consultant Physician and Chair of the Irish Heart Foundation's Council on Women and CVD said: "Every two hours a woman dies in Ireland from cardiovascular disease (heart, stroke and blood vessel diseases). When it comes to health issues, women are more concerned about breast cancer even though seven times as many women die from heart disease and stroke in Ireland each year. Our goal is to alert women that especially after the menopause, they are at risk of heart attack and stroke, as much as any man. But the good news is that a positive lifestyle can alter risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Go Red for Women is a wake-up call to every woman in Ireland to take care of her heart health."

Medical Director of the Irish Heart Foundation, Consultant Cardiologist, Dr Angie Brown said: "The campaign also aims to highlight that the signs and symptoms of heart attack may be different for women to those of men. A woman may experience more vague symptoms such as nausea, tiredness, shortness of breath, rather than the more usual crushing pain in the chest. Unfortunately this may mean that women delay in getting to the hospital and therefore lose valuable time for the necessary treatment."

Red Alert messages for women:

- Be active - at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity 5 times a week
- Eat a healthy diet - eat more fruit and vegetables and fresh foods; eat less fat, fries and convenience foods
- If you smoke, stop - the risk of CVD is reduced by half, one year after quitting
- Have regular blood pressure and cholesterol checks with your family doctor
- Know your family history and the signs and symptoms of heart disease.
- Go easy on alcohol - no more than 14 standard drinks per week.
- Enjoy life. Take time out for yourself and keep in touch with friends

Signs and symptoms of heart attack in women can include:

Chest discomfort. Squeezing, uncomfortable pressure or pain in the centre of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes.

Discomfort and/or pain spreading to other areas of the upper body such as the shoulders, neck or upper arms

Shortness of breath, unexplained weakness or fatigue, anxiety or unusual nervousness, indigestion or gas-like pain, breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, vomiting, light-headedness and collapse.

Dizziness and/or fainting

Not all of the above symptoms are always present. If only some are present don't wait. Get help fast and dial 999. Meanwhile sit or lie down.

Warning signs of stroke

The following can help you recognise if someone is having a stroke and act FAST if you see any of them:

FACE - has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?

ARMS - can they raise both arms and keep them there?

SPEECH - is their speech slurred?

TIME to call 999 - if you see any single one of these signs