

# The importance of Women's Health

## Abstract

The contributions and achievements of women in this industry are exemplary and these achievements have made significant contributions to healthcare and society in general. These women are trailblazers. They may make contributions as physicians, police officers, firefighters, scientists, entrepreneurs, educators, authors, inventors, engineers, attorneys, astronauts, Vice-Presidents, and in many other ways that create impactful footprints in the world. All these positions require mental clarity, a certain level of energy, and durability. It is also important to ensure that there is a legacy of courageous women who can continue these contributions and achievements for lifetimes to come. One way to help increase the likelihood of this is by creating awareness and addressing health issues that impact women. Women face many health-related issues in their lifetime, some at disproportionate rates. Education, screenings, and regular check-ups can assist with early detection, prevention, and a better quality of life. Some of the most common health issues that women battle includes breast cancer, cervical cancer, and cardiovascular disease.

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## Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is generally characterized by a tumor or cancerous cells in the cervix. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization list cervical cancer as the fourth most common cancer that affects women in the world. There were about 604,000 new diagnoses in 2020. Cervical cancer is caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) in more than 95% of the cases. Approximately 50% of cervical cancer diagnoses are caused by HPV types 16 and 18. HPV is a sexually transmitted infection. HPV is a virus that may affect the population at large, at some point in people's lives. It is cleared by most people's systems. However, there is a percentage of people's bodies that do not automatically clear it from the system. It is the leading cause of death related to cancer in women ages 15 to 45. About 500,000 women die from cervical cancer each year.

This cancer can be prevented and cured; however, early detection is key. Cervical cancer screenings, HPV tests, and pap tests are paramount in its prevention. There is

also an option for HPV vaccination that can be used for preventative measures as well. Pre-cancer treatments may include cryotherapy, excision, or thermal ablation. Post diagnostic treatments may include surgical treatments, radiation therapy, and/or chemotherapy.

## Breast Cancer

Breast Cancer develops in the epithelium of the ducts or lobules in breast tissue. It can then metastasize to the lymph nodes or other organs in the body, causing widespread complications and sometimes even death. There were approximately 2.3 million women who were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2020. About 685,000 women die from breast cancer each year. Breast cancer is considered the world's most prevalent cancer with approximately 7.8 million women worldwide currently battling this disease.

While early detection is one of the biggest survival modalities, treatment can often include a single or multi-therapy regimen of surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, and/or biological therapy. While many

risk factors could potentially influence the development of breast cancer, being a female is the greatest risk factor as this cancer disproportionately affects more women than men in approximately a 99 to 1 ratio. Mutations on the BRCA-1, BRCA-2, and PALB-2 genes may increase the risk of developing breast cancer. However, early detection can result in a 90% or higher survival rate.

## Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) includes a variety of heart conditions such as heart attack, hypertension, heart failure, and coronary artery disease. While there has been an increased awareness of heart disease occurring in women, it is still a leading cause of death in women. Risk factors that may increase the likelihood of heart disease include an unhealthy diet, alcohol, smoking, high-stress levels, high blood pressure, weight, diabetes, and high cholesterol. CVD accounts for approximately 8.6 million deaths of women worldwide every year. Specifically, ischemic heart disease and stroke are the main diseases that result in death among women. There are approximately 275 million women in the world living with some form of cardiovascular disease.

As with the other diseases mentioned, early prevention and treatment are the keys to surviving CVD. Regular medical check-ups, risk factor management, and treatment are also important in reducing the likelihood of progressive disease.

When healthcare providers diagnose CVD, they may include certain blood tests and an electrocardiogram.

There are many other health disparities that affect women. Oftentimes, being too busy becomes an excuse for not giving attention to a lingering symptom or for not having a regular check-up. Some decide that their time would be better allocated to other activities that at the time seem more impactful. While the things that are accomplished daily are extremely important and impactful, none of those things will be able to get done if a person becomes ill or incapacitated in some way by something that could have been prevented or treated. Mindsets have to shift to one that embodies and prioritizes health so that all of the other things can be done as well.

There have been many progressions in the last few decades regarding women's health issues. However, there is more work to be done as there are still women being impacted by these diseases. Women are valuable contributors to our society. Amid all the accolades, accomplishments, and service, it is important that women also take the time to take care of themselves. Having a healthy body will allow for the energy and mental clarity to continue making such powerful and positive impacts in the world. Prevention, early detection, and treatment are keys in helping to ensure a continuing legacy of powerful inspirational women making positive impacts in the world.