



Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) Women and Heart Disease Fact Sheet — 2013

Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program

January 2013

Why is heart disease important?

- Heart disease (includes coronary heart disease and heart failure) and stroke are the first and third leading causes of death among all Connecticut residents . Similarly, heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in Connecticut, killing 3,645 women in 2009—that’s about 1 in every 4 female deaths (2009 Mortality Files).
- Research has shown that only 54% of women recognize that heart disease is their number 1 killer (CDC).
- About 17.5% of all hospital discharges in Connecticut, or 58,853 discharges, were due to cardiovascular diseases (CVD) in 2010. The main types of CVD are coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke, and heart failure. Of these hospital discharges for CVD, about 47% were among females (2010 Hospital Discharge Abstract and Billing Database).
- About \$2.3 billion was billed for CVD hospitalizations in Connecticut in 2010. Among females, over \$1.0 billion was billed for CVD hospitalizations. CVD also incur enormous indirect costs (2010 Hospital Discharge Abstract and Billing Database).
- An estimated 7.1% of Connecticut adults (18 years old and older), or about 195,400 adults have been told by a health care professional that they have had a heart attack, a stroke, or coronary heart disease (2011 BRFSS data).
- Approximately 5.6% of Connecticut women (18 years old and older), or about 88,951 women have been told by a health care professional that they have had a heart attack, a stroke, or coronary heart disease. About 8.2% of Connecticut men, or about 106,471 men, have been told that they have had a heart attack, a stroke, or coronary heart disease. The difference in rates among Connecticut men and women is statistically significant (2011 BRFSS data).

What are risk factors for heart disease?

- Risk factors for heart disease and stroke may be non-modifiable or modifiable. Non-modifiable risk factors include increasing age and family history of heart disease and stroke. Key modifiable risk factors are high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, obesity, and physical inactivity.
- Table 1 displays the age-adjusted prevalence rates of the key modifiable risk factors among all Connecticut adults, Connecticut men, and Connecticut women.
- Rates of diagnosed diabetes, obesity, smoking, and physical inactivity do not vary significantly among men and women in Connecticut (Table 1).
- Rates of diagnosed high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol are significantly higher among men compared with women in Connecticut (Table 1).

Table 1. Prevalence of Key Modifiable Risk Factors of Heart Disease among Connecticut Adults (18 years and older)

| Risk Factor | All Connecticut Adults Percent* (95% CI)** | Females Percent* (95% CI)** | Males Percent* (95% CI)** |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Diabetes | 8.5 (7.7-9.3) | 7.6 (6.7-8.5) | 9.4 (8.1-10.8) |
| High Blood Pressure | 27.6 (26.3-28.9) | 24.8 (23.3-26.2) | 30.4 (28.3-32.6) |
| High Blood Cholesterol | 31.6 (29.9-33.3) | 27.6 (25.3-29.8) | 36.0 (33.3-38.6) |
| Obesity | 24.3 (22.7-25.9) | 23.2 (21.1-25.4) | 25.3 (22.9-27.6) |
| Current Smoker | 17.7 (16.2-19.2) | 16.0 (14.0-18.0) | 19.5 (17.2-21.7) |
| Physically Inactive [^] | 25.0 (23.4-26.6) | 26.1 (24.0-28.3) | 23.6 (21.3-26.0) |

*Age-adjusted 2011 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Data

**CI = Confidence Interval

[^]No physical activity other than regular job (no leisure time physical activity)**How can heart disease be prevented?**

- The prevention of heart disease involves identifying and modifying risk factors of the disease including:
 - Improving control of blood pressure;
 - Quitting smoking;
 - Improving control blood glucose control among persons with diabetes;
 - Improving diet through increasing the amounts of vegetables and fruits eaten daily;
 - Increasing physical activity to meet national guidelines (www.health.gov/paguidelines); and
 - Moderating alcohol consumption.

References

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