

# Women's MIND BODY WELLNESS SUMMIT

**Expert: Dr. Joan Crawford, DO, FACC, FASE**

Medical Director

Go Red for Women

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When Dr. Crawford was 15-years-old, she had the opportunity to serve as an intern in a hospital and was able to watch an open-heart surgery. At that point, she knew what she wanted to do.

## **Heart Disease and Women**

The #1 killer of women is heart disease. Most women think they will die of cancer, specifically breast cancer. But 1 in 3 women will die of heart disease. Up until a few years ago, women were much less likely to get stress tests and other tests based on gender.

## **Symptoms of Heart Issues**

*The symptoms may be vague:*

- Chest pain with or without pain going down either arm
- Shortness of breath
- Easy to fatigue
- Pressure in the upper stomach (often mistaken for indigestion)
- Pain in the back between the shoulder blades

Look for a change. If there is something that you usually can do and suddenly have trouble doing it, tell your doctor. Over half of women with heart disease don't have typical symptoms. *The average time it takes for a woman to get to a hospital from first signs is 12 hours.*

“Some people have an overwhelming sense . . . that something isn't right.  
You should always listen to your body.”

## **How Stress Impacts Heart Health**

*Consider how you react to stress:*

- When we are stressed, adrenaline makes our heart rate go up.
- When you are stressed over time, that affects you differently.
- If you have stress that leads you to eat poorly for a long period of time, that dietary change could be a problem for your heart.
- Happy stress (like around the holidays) is still stress and still affects your actions, which affect your body. During happy stress times you may be sleeping less and eating more.

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## **Set Yourself Up for a Healthy Lifestyle**

*Be prepared:*

- Go to work with healthy snacks and drinks, so you don't head to the candy machine.
- Put a cooler in the car with your food if you don't know where you are going to be or if your job requires that you move from place to place.
- Bring food. Sleep more. Stress less. Exercise. Try to make a schedule.
- Know your numbers. Know your cholesterol; you want the HDL (high) to be high and the LDL (low) to be low. Know your sugar. Know your weight and your body mass index (BMI). Your BMI should be between 18 and 25. Ask your doctor to share these with you. You may even be able to sign on to your electronic patient record to see your numbers.
- Find a doctor whom you are comfortable talking to.
- If you don't see anyone other than your OB/GYN, they can take your blood pressure regularly to get you started with your numbers.

## **TOP TIPS**

1. Know your numbers.
2. Get a scale. It will give you a sense of where you are and what you need to work on.
3. Track your steps. You are probably walking less during your day than you think you are.
4. Get a blood pressure cuff, especially if you have high blood pressure.