

PATIENT RESOURCES

Prepare for your visit. Know your body.

Select a guide below to read online, or download a printable copy to keep for reference.

PRE-VISIT PREPARATION

Your First Visit



What to expect during your first appointment, and how to prepare.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Women's Heart Warning Signs



What to watch for in your body, and when to act.

A NOTE FROM DR. GIESLER

Heart disease is the number one killer of women — more than all cancers combined. Yet most women couldn't name a friend who has it. Part of the reason is that heart symptoms in women often look very different from what we see in the movies. You deserve to know what to watch for in your own body.

HEART WARNING SIGNS IN WOMEN

The symptoms below can signal that something is wrong with your heart. They are not always dramatic. In women, heart symptoms are often subtle — and they are often dismissed. Know your body, and take these seriously.

CHEST PRESSURE OR HEAVINESS

Not a sharp pain — more like pressure, tightness, squeezing, or a heavy weight in the center of your chest. Classic, but often overlooked in women.

JAW OR NECK DISCOMFORT

Pressure or aching in the jaw, throat, or neck — with or without chest involvement. In women, this is sometimes the only symptom.

SHORTNESS OF BREATH

Feeling winded with activities that previously felt easy, or shortness of breath that comes on without exertion.

SUDDEN OR UNUSUAL FATIGUE

Not ordinary tiredness — an overwhelming exhaustion, especially with physical activity or exertion.

SWEATING UNEXPECTEDLY

Breaking into a sweat without obvious cause, especially alongside other symptoms on this list.

CHANGES IN EXERCISE TOLERANCE

The hill you walk every day is suddenly harder. The block that took 10 minutes now winds you. This shift is a signal your heart wants you to notice.

YOUR DAILY WALK IS A STRESS TEST

One of the most reliable early warning signs of heart disease is a change in how you feel with activity — not just chest pain. If physical tasks that used to feel easy are suddenly leaving you winded, fatigued, or uncomfortable, that change matters, regardless of where the discomfort is.

ASK YOURSELF

- Is activity that used to feel normal now causing discomfort, breathlessness, or fatigue?
- Do you feel pressure, heaviness, or a strange sensation anywhere in your chest, jaw, neck, or arms during activity?
- Is your body telling you something is different — even if it is hard to describe?

If the answer to any of these is yes, that is worth a conversation with a cardiologist — not watching and waiting.

WHEN TO GET HELP

Call 911 or go to the ER

- Chest pressure or pain that doesn't go away
- Symptoms lasting more than a few minutes
- Sudden severe shortness of breath
- Fainting or near-fainting
- Irregular, racing, or pounding heartbeat with dizziness

Call The Heart Center For Women

- New or changing symptoms you can't explain
- Exercise tolerance that has noticeably changed
- Palpitations or irregular beats that are new or frequent
- Symptoms that come and go but keep returning
- Something that feels different and you want answers

IF YOU ARE BEING DISMISSED

YOU ARE NOT CRAZY. YOU KNOW YOUR BODY.

Heart disease in women frequently presents differently than in men — and not all providers are trained to recognize the difference. If you are being dismissed, it is appropriate to seek a second opinion from someone who specializes in women's cardiovascular health. Not everyone is aware of female patterns of heart disease. There are people who are — and you deserve one of them.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

The best time to catch heart disease is before you have symptoms. These four numbers are your foundation — and you should know all of them.

NUMBER	TARGET	WHY IT MATTERS
Blood pressure	Below 130/80	The #1 modifiable risk factor for heart disease and stroke

Cholesterol	Discuss with Dr. Giesler based on your risk level	Drives plaque buildup in artery walls
Blood sugar (A1C)	Below 5.7% (normal)	Diabetes significantly increases cardiac risk
Inflammation (hs-CRP)	Discuss with Dr. Giesler	Chronic inflammation accelerates plaque buildup

Heart disease is treatable. It is preventable. And you are worth it.

If something doesn't feel right — call us.

heartcenterforwomen.com

This guide is for educational purposes. It does not replace a clinical evaluation. If you are experiencing symptoms, please contact a healthcare provider.

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