

Women's Health **UPDATE**

Taking Control Of Heart Health

(NAPSA)—Study after study show ways by which women can protect themselves from heart disease, yet it remains the No. 1 killer of women in the United States, claiming more than 500,000 lives each year.

“Women who are overweight or sedentary need to lose weight and increase their activity level to reduce their risk for heart disease,” said Elizabeth Battaglini Cahill, RN, executive director of the National Women’s Health Resource Center (NWHRC).

Cahill says other changes you can make to help lower your risk of developing heart disease include:

- Lower your blood pressure—Even slightly high blood pressure levels can double your risk for coronary heart disease, and the higher the pressure, the higher the risk. More than half of all women over 55 have high blood pressure. The condition is even more common and more severe in African-American women.

- Lower your blood cholesterol level—Today, more than half of the women over age 55 need to lower their blood cholesterol, and a quarter of all American women have blood cholesterol levels high enough to pose a serious risk for coronary heart disease.

- Stop smoking—Women who smoke are two to six times as likely to suffer a heart attack as nonsmoking women, and the risk increases with the number of cigarettes smoked per day. Also, smokers who have a heart attack are more likely to die and die suddenly than are nonsmokers.

- Lose weight—Overweight women are much more likely to



There are a number of ways by which women can reduce their risk of heart disease.

develop heart-related problems, even if they have no other risk factors. Excess body weight in women is linked with coronary heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure and death from heart-related causes. The more overweight you are, the higher your risk for heart disease.

- Increase physical activity—As little as 30 minutes of moderate activity on most, and preferably all, days of the week helps protect the heart. Examples of moderate activity are brisk walking or bicycling, raking leaves or gardening. Vigorous exercise includes running, jogging, swimming laps and cross-country skiing.

To learn more about how to be heart healthy, visit NWHRC online at www.HealthyWomen.org.