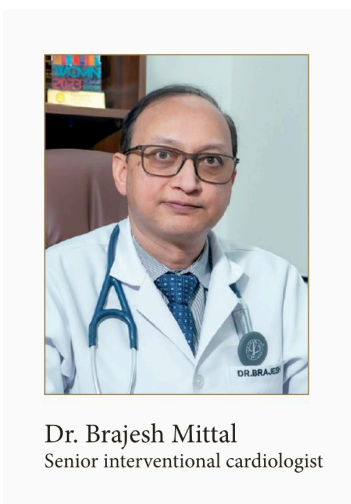


Mind your heart health!

Do not ignore and be regular on your heart checks says Dr Brajesh Mittal, senior interventional cardiologist educating on the essentials that every woman must know about heart diseases.



Dr. Brajesh Mittal
Senior interventional cardiologist



Nathalie had just turned 60 and retired from her job as sales director in a large FMCG chain. She was looking forward to enjoying adventure treks, coffee on a moonlit beach, walks by the sea and many such fun moments with her friends, when she suffered her first heart attack.

It was a diffuse tightness radiating from the central chest region to left arm and jaw as she turned in for the day. Being vigilant, Nathalie asked her husband to drive her to the nearest emergency. Within the next 20 minutes, Nathalie was diagnosed as undergoing a heart attack. Timely procedures by the interventional cardiologist helped clear the severe blockage in her one of the major coronary arteries.

Most women think heart attacks happen to men and they are not at risk. According to the American Heart Association, Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) kills more women than all forms of cancer combined, yet only 44 per cent acknowledge

CVD as health threat.

According to Dr Brajesh Mittal, Deputy Medical Director of Medicare Hospital, leading interventional cardiologist, and convener of SHAKE (Saving Heart Attacks Key Efforts) conference, it is important for women to understand that they too are at high risk of developing CVD - to get away from a misconception that CVD is a predominant disease of men.

“Women typically turn up for medical consultation regarding heart disease at a much later stage than their men counterpart. Though CVD and heart attacks are equally devastating in women; the only

respite is they have at least ten years extra span of onset. Typically, after menopause, women have a higher risk because of drop in estrogen and progesterone levels.

Dr Mittal continued, “In women the risk of CVD starts much earlier if they undergo major health issues during pregnancy and childbirth viz gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia, hypertension. They have narrower blood vessels including cardiac arteries and are at higher risk for coronary heart disease (CAD) when plaque builds up.”

Neglecting red flags

Dr Mittal added that women usually hold the controls for family wellbeing and are often taking a lot of emotional stress. They need to be mindful of their emotional health as they tend to bottle up their emotions and have a higher rate of incidence of clinical depression, PTSD etc. especially after a miscarriage or because of the stress of juggling domestic and work duties, and the toll of caring for the family.

“Women tend to place their health on last priority often skipping regular check-ups or recognizing a red flag. Added to this is chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, hyperthyroidism, and obesity, early menopause... all these factors increase the risk of heart disease. The problems get compounded if they smoke or have alcohol. Women think heart disease happens to men folk. However, given all the above reasons, it is important a woman undergoes heart screening after 50. If she has a family history of heart disease or other risk factors, she needs to undergo annual screening much earlier.”

Who is at risk for heart disease?

- ♡ Women with a family history of CVD
- ♡ Women suffering from

gynecological problems such as PCODS, endometriosis, those with gestational diabetes, premature delivery, early menopause, and those with low iron count.

- ♡ Smokers and regular alcohol drinkers
- ♡ Those who are obese have a sedentary lifestyle.
- ♡ Women with emotional disturbances and depressions
- ♡ Patients with breast cancer are treated with chemotherapy and radiotherapy.
- ♡ Women with diseases like SLE, Rheumatoid disease have also increased incidence of CVD.

Symptoms to watch out for

- ♡ Chest pain, uneasiness, excessive sweating, radiating pain in left arm to the left jaw.
- ♡ A feeling of dizziness, palpitation, breathlessness, being unsteady on feet.
- ♡ Excessive exhaustion and fatigue
- ♡ Unexplained pain in abdomen, indigestion, nausea after a physical work out.

A stitch in Time...

- ♡ Every woman over 50 must go in for regular ECG and heart screening.
- ♡ Women with a family history of CVD or those with existing diabetes, hypertension, and obesity, must establish a regular heart check routine by the age of 40 years of age.
- ♡ Cutting back on smoking, alcohol consumption and including a higher plant-based portion in the diet, nuts, seeds, high fiber green salad, would help keep LDL cholesterol within check and help delay heart disease in even those who have a predisposition.
- ♡ Follow an active lifestyle by including at least 30-45 minutes of cardio in your daily routine.

A little education, awareness and lifestyle tweak can go a long way in helping our mother's daughters and sisters cut back the risk of heart disease!

Myths and Facts

Myth: CVD is less common in women.

Fact: More women than men die of CVD.

Myth: Cancers are number 1 killer

Fact: CVD related deaths are more than all cancers combined.

Myth: CVD is less serious in women

Fact: CVD is more serious in women, higher complications, and deaths.

Myth: No chest pain means no heart problem

Fact: More than 50% women do not have typical symptoms of chest pain; their presentation can be quite varied. **H**

CVD in women continues to be seriously understudied, under-recognized, under-diagnosed and under-treated. This is primarily the result of various misconceptions, including the widespread view that cardiovascular disease affects men more than it does women.

We have kept a special session for Women's' Heart in our forthcoming SHAKEHEART 2024 conference on April 21.

For any additional queries regarding heart health you can send an email to admin@shakeheart.com.

In September 2024, we plan to have a dedicated Heart Health event. Watch this space for further updates.