

# Veteran Updates

## February is Heart Health Month

**Fact:** One in four (25%) women in the United States die from heart disease, one in thirty (3%) die from breast cancer.

**Fact:** More women than men have died from heart disease each year since 1984.

**Fact:** Most women believe heart disease is only something that happens to men.

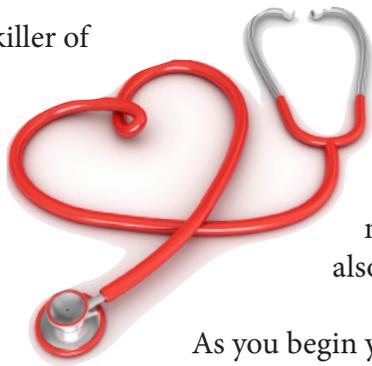
Heart disease is the #1 killer of women in the United States. Join us this month as we raise awareness to fight against heart disease in women.

Heart disease and heart attacks happen when blood flow to the heart is blocked by plaque build-up in the coronary arteries. Risk factors for heart disease include: smoking, being overweight, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, being extremely over-stressed, and physical inactivity.

What can women do to stay healthy? Regular heart screenings are important to maintaining a healthy heart. The American Heart Association recommends getting

your cholesterol checked every five years, blood pressure checked at least every two years, blood glucose levels checked every three years, and body mass index checked at every regular health care visit.

Women should aim for at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week. Healthier eating translates into efficient heart function and overall wellbeing. Try to eat at least 4.5 cups of fruits and vegetables per day and six to eight servings of whole grains. Legumes (beans), unsalted nuts and fatty fish are also excellent options.



As you begin your journey to better heart health, keep these things in mind:

- **Don't become overwhelmed.** Every step brings you closer to a healthier heart.
- **Don't go it alone.** Ask friends and family to join you in your quest to get healthy.
- **Don't get discouraged.** You may not be able to take all of the steps at one time.
- **Reward yourself.** Find fun things to do to decrease your stress.

## VA Goes Red for Women

Although heart disease is often thought of as a problem for men, more women than men die of heart disease annually.

Fortunately, lifestyle changes, medicines, and medical or surgical procedures can help women lower their risk for heart disease. Early and ongoing prevention is important.

SFVAMC will raise awareness of heart disease in women, particularly women Veterans and VA employees, by participating in "VA Goes Red" on **Friday, February 7**. Consider wearing red to raise awareness of heart disease, the #1 killer of women.

Stop by the Stairwell Alcove (Bldg. 7, ground floor, on the way to the Canteen) on **February 7 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.** for information about heart disease, healthy recipes, tips for a healthier lifestyle, and giveaways.

# Heart Attack in Women: Know the Signs

## Women Veterans Program Manager

SFVAMC welcomes Denise Bartlett, MSN, FNP-BC, our new Women Veterans Program Manager.

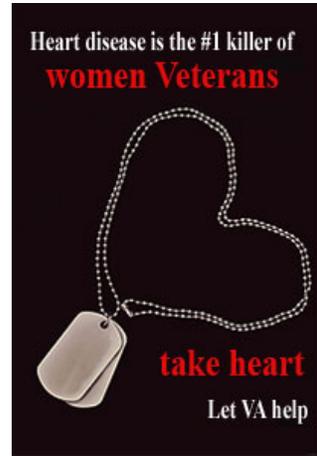
Denise comes to us from the VA Southern Nevada Health Care System in Las Vegas. There she launched the women's health program and served as nurse practitioner, providing comprehensive primary health care to Women Veterans for over 20 years.

Our Women Veterans Program Manager advises and advocates for women Veterans. She can help coordinate all the services you may need, from primary care to specialized care for chronic conditions or reproductive health. She may be reached at (415) 221-4810, ext. 3956.



What are the symptoms of a heart attack in women? According to the American Heart Association, here are the signs:

1. Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.
2. Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
3. Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.



4. Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

If you have any of these signs, don't wait more than five minutes before calling for help. Call 9-1-1 and get to a hospital right away.

## Barriers to Care Survey Launching

Are you a woman Veteran? Be on the lookout for a way to help VA Women's Health Services! You may have the chance to provide important input about the health care services you receive.

Women Veterans from across the country will be contacted as part of a nationwide study sponsored by the VA Women's Health Services office. This study will help VA better understand barriers to the provision of health care for women Veterans.

During this study, a sample of women Veterans will receive a pre-notification letter, followed by a telephone call to seek input on issues related to their healthcare services.

If you get a letter or a phone call about this study, please participate and make your voice heard. It does not matter whether you have actually received care at a VA facility before; if you are a woman Veteran your opinion about health services matters.

