

## The top 5 health concerns of women

Have heart – take control

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*"I declare to you that women must not depend upon the protection of man but must be taught to protect herself, and there I take my stand."*

– Susan B. Anthony

Women have made great strides in taking care of themselves. Today, women are powerful business leaders, politicians and entrepreneurs. However, while they run companies and homes and take part in creative passions, they often fall short when it comes to their own health.

Let's face it: Knowledge is power. Knowing a little bit about something can mean everything when it comes to health. Understanding the causes, symptoms and dangers of a particular disease or disorder can help you gain control over your body.

Hormones, genetics, stress, injury and nutrition can all determine the state of a woman's physical and mental health. The craziness of life can often leave women feeling lost while trying to stay on the path to healthy living, especially when their foremost concern is taking care of everyone else: their children, husbands and aging parents. Knowing about important health risks, concerns and symptoms can be the boost that can save your life – or at least your sanity.



The top five health concerns for women are:

1. **Heart Disease**
2. **Breast Cancer**
3. **Osteoporosis**
4. **Stroke**
5. **Depression**

## 2. Breast cancer

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TOP 5 WOMEN'S HEALTH CONCERNS,  
CONTINUED ...

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**What it is:** Cancer cells form uncontrollably in breast tissue, causing deadly tumors. If left untreated, the cancer can spread to other parts of the body.

**Statistics:** The website [womenshealth.gov](http://womenshealth.gov) reports that one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime.

**Symptoms and warning signs:** swelling or a lump in the breast, nipple pain or discharge, breast tenderness or swelling in the armpit.

The alarming number of women who have developed breast cancer in recent years has spawned numerous studies and advanced research projects. The numbers are staggering, but the survival rate is increasing.



"The majority of patients diagnosed with breast cancer will survive and thrive with appropriate treatment, especially those who benefit from early detection," says Dr. Lisa Guerra of the Hoag Breast Care Center in Newport Beach. "Certainly, close follow-up in terms of future breast imaging and clinical breast examinations, as well as blood work and/or other imaging work-ups as appropriate, will be necessary to move forward."

According to Guerra, in the early stages of breast cancer, most women will not detect overt symptoms. Getting an annual mammogram increases the likelihood of early detection. Those women with a family history of ovarian or breast cancer, or those of Ashkenazi-Jewish descent with a diagnosis of ovarian or breast cancer at any age, are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer. Genetic counseling and genetic testing is often recommended to women with high risk factors.

"A women should try to maintain general good health," says Dr. Bichlien Nguyen of Breast Cancer Care Specialists Inc. in Fountain Valley. "Research has shown that eating a diet high in vegetables and fruit (at least five to eight servings per day) as well as whole grain – plus exercising regularly and keeping weight at or near ideal levels – significantly reduces the risks of having breast cancer."

Breast cancer diagnosis can be heartbreaking and debilitating. Women can easily plummet into a depression after cancer treatment starts, and this can erode daily motivation.

Nguyen advises cancer patients to ask questions and voice all concerns with doctors.

"I think one of the most important things is to discuss your anxiety and fear honestly as soon as possible with your doctor," she says.

In addition to physician support, Nguyen suggests keeping busy with normal activities, maintaining a positive body image and consider meeting with a support group or social worker.

Susan G. Komen for the Cure holds annual events such as the Race for the Cure and the Pink Tie Ball to advocate research and breast cancer awareness. For the past 25 years, the organization has actively educated the public on breast health and provided resources to patients and all concerned people.

"The Orange County Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure partners with community hospitals, groups and leaders to provide our most at-risk women with the vital resources they need in terms of screening and diagnostic care, as well as appropriate treatment," says Guerra. "That increased awareness and access also drives an ambition to search out ways to make breast cancer a diagnosis of the past."