



# DON'T SWALLOW EVERYTHING YOU HEAR ABOUT WOMEN'S HEALTH

Some medications are life-saving treatments for women and girls with serious or chronic health conditions. But some medications may not be necessary or may be inappropriate, and may cause more harm than good. **Here's what to consider:**

#### Women's health is big business

Women are often the target audience for prescription drug advertisements now common on TV, in magazines, newspapers and on the Internet. Prescription drugs have an important place in the health of Canadian women. But drug ads often overstate health benefits and rarely highlight potential health risks.

#### Newer medications are not always better

Older medications have often been tested more thoroughly and for longer periods of time, which means that there is more information available about their safety and effectiveness. And they are usually more affordable and more likely to be covered by public and private drug plans.

#### Men and women's bodies respond differently to drugs

Until recently, most drug research was conducted on men and it was assumed that the results could be applied equally to women. But women often have different body sizes from men, and women's bodies react differently to some drugs. This means that the same drug treatment and dosage may not be appropriate for both men and women.

#### Women's cycles are not illnesses

Menstruation, menopause and other natural life events have often been treated as health problems that require drug treatments. For most women these are healthy processes that do not require medication.

#### Pharmaceutical drugs cannot cure problems that are social, cultural and environmental

Women are more likely to live in poverty and have less financial security than men. Women are more likely to experience violence in the home, and sexual harassment in the workplace. Women often have more caregiving responsibilities than men, and report more stress from work-home life imbalance. Women are also more likely to be worried about their weight and body image.

These, and many other factors may affect women and men differently, and may contribute to higher rates of stress, anxiety and depression for women. Drug treatments to address these life stresses may only provide temporary relief, and do not offer a solution.

Get the full story from:  
**The Canadian Women's Health Network**  
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