

Women and Stroke

Stroke statistics for women (Source: Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada):

- ?? Almost 60% of the 50,000 strokes in Canada each year affect women.
- ?? A greater percentage of women than men die from stroke. (In 1999, 8.5% of all female deaths in Canada were the result of stroke compared to 5.6% form men.)
- ?? In 1999, a total of 9,038 women died in Canada as a result in stroke.

Heart disease and stroke differ among women and men in several ways. While men are slightly more likely to have a stroke than women, women are much more likely to die from the event, particularly women over the age of 85. Some risk factors may affect women differently than men. Diabetes, for example, has a two time greater risk of stroke among women than among men. Women have additional risk factors, including oral contraceptive use in combination with smoking. As well, women who survive strokes are more likely to live alone than men because of our longer life expectancy. As a result, a woman's hospital stay will generally be longer than a man's. Women are also more likely to be transferred to a chronic care facility rather than go home or to rehabilitation. There are also differences in the way women and men recover from strokes. Women usually recover better from language loss after a stroke than men, as we use larger portions of both sides of the brain for language than men do.

It's important for any women having a stroke to get medical care as quickly as possible. Quick care for a stroke can minimize injury to the brain and even mean the difference between life and death. If you or someone you know experiences any of these symptoms, seek help immediately.

- ?? Sudden weakness on one side of the body in an arm, hand or leg;
- ?? Sudden numbness on one side of the face or body;
- ?? Sudden dimness or loss of vision, particularly in only one eye;
- ?? Sudden difficulty speaking or sudden inability to understand what someone is saying;
- ?? Sudden dizziness or loss of balance;
- ?? Sudden headache;
- ?? Seizures;
- ?? Nausea and vomiting;
- ?? Sudden loss of mental ability;
- ?? Loss of consciousness.

For more information on strokes and heart disease, please visit the following sites:

- ?? The 2000 Victoria Declaration: Women, heart diseases and stroke (LINK TO: http://www.cwhn.ca/resources/victoria_declaration/index.html)
- ?? Women and heart health - Women's Health Bureau (LINK TO: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/women/facts_issues/facts_heart.htm)
- ?? Putting their money where their heart is (LINK TO: <http://www.cwhn.ca/network-reseau/2-2/debate.html>)