

Women and men overeat for different reasons

When a man and a woman reach for a second helping — or a third — it's likely that there are different motivations behind their behavior.

The tendency to overeat can be related to changes in the brain's reward region, and this brain activity is different among men and women, according to researchers from UCLA.

Their study suggests that emotions and compulsion are likely driving a woman's actions. Women experience more changes in the reward system related to responsiveness to dopamine, which helps regulate emotional responses, according to the study published in the International Journal of Obesity.

In men, there is a different pattern in the brain's sensorimotor regions. This is a signal that their overeating relates more to an awareness of sensations in the gut, the study said.

To help curb overeating, think about why you want to eat. Ask yourself if you're really hungry — if you're not, distract yourself by picking up a good book or walking around the block.

When you have a meal, eat slowly and enjoy the flavors and textures of the food. This gives your body time to recognize the feeling of being full.

Are you up-to-date on cancer screenings?

A screening for cancer can detect the disease in the early stages, when it's easier to treat. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends women be screened for:



Cervical cancer: A Pap test is recommended for all women beginning at age 21. If results are normal, the test is done every three years. Women over 30 can get a Pap test and HPV test every 5 years, if test results are normal.



Breast cancer: A woman between the ages of 40 and 49 should talk to her doctor about when to start having a mammogram. Generally, a woman age 50 to 74 should get a mammogram every one to two years.



Colon cancer: Screening begins at age 50, or earlier if a close relative has had colon cancer or colorectal polyps. Women with certain conditions, such as Crohn's disease, may need to be screened at a younger age.

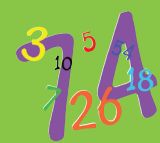
The exact timing of these screenings depends on several factors, so check with your health care provider for the screening schedule that's right for you.



Heart disease, cancer top concerns for women

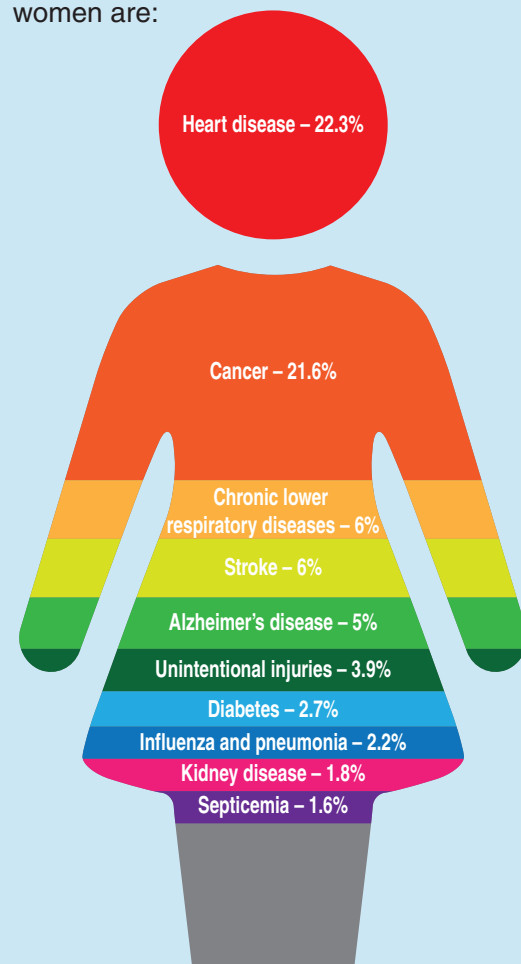
Heart disease and cancer are by far the most deadly health issues for women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

By the numbers



Together, they accounted for almost half of the deaths in 2014, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

The leading causes of death among women are:



Heart disease not inevitable for women with gestational diabetes

A woman who has diabetes while pregnant has a higher chance of having a heart attack or stroke, but a healthy lifestyle can reduce the risk of these serious health concerns.

Gestational diabetes, a type of high blood sugar that occurs only during pregnancy, often disappears after the baby is born.

However, many women later develop type 2 diabetes, and studies have shown that gestational diabetes puts a woman at risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart attack, stroke, and hardening of the arteries.

Making heart-healthy choices in the years after giving birth can reduce a woman's risk for cardiovascular disease, a study from the National Institutes of Health has shown.

While it confirmed that there is a link between gestational diabetes and cardiovascular disease, it also found strong evidence that women who make healthy lifestyle choices can lower that risk.

Women who did not adopt a healthy lifestyle after having gestational diabetes had a 43 percent higher risk for cardiovascular disease, the study showed, especially heart attack and stroke.



Is your job widening your waistline?

The time we spend at work can make an impact on the number we see on the scale.

Weight gain differs depending on your occupation, and women who sit at work for an extended period of time are less likely to be active and more likely to see pounds accumulate. A study published in the September 2017 issue of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine followed a group of women in the medical field for more than six years, and found that a woman's job has a significant impact on the amount of time spent sitting and may influence physical activity and weight gain.

In addition, a 2016 CareerBuilder study found that 44 percent of workers gained weight in their current job, and women were more likely to gain weight than men.

To keep extra pounds away:



Start the day with breakfast. A healthy breakfast may keep you from overeating later in the day. Try eggs with whole grain toast, oatmeal with fruit, or a smoothie made with almond milk and fruit.



Pack a lunch. This lets you control portion size and can ensure that you have healthy options available. In addition, pack healthy snacks such as almonds or hummus with carrots to keep blood sugar levels steady.



Get enough rest. A lack of sleep leads to a yearning for foods high in fat and carbohydrates, and makes it easier to cave into cravings. Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Try to go to bed and get up at the same time each day, and sleep in a room that's cool, dark, and quiet.



Move more. See if some coworkers would like to walk with you at lunchtime. Use a sit-stand desk, if possible, and get into a routine of standing for about 20 minutes and then sitting for about 10. Park in the far corner of the lot or get off the bus a few stops early. Stand when you're on the phone, and take a longer route to the printer or restroom if possible. Another trick is to make it a habit to exercise first thing in the morning, before the demands of the day get in the way.



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Heart-healthy choices help everyone

All women and men benefit from making lifestyle choices that support heart health. These include:

Eating a healthy diet. Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables. Choose whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean protein, and fish. Limit sugary drinks, sweets, and fatty meats. Avoid saturated and trans fats.

Maintaining a healthy weight. Practice portion control, and read labels for information on serving size, calories, and added sugars.

Exercising. Make time in your schedule for activities you enjoy — it might be running, swimming, dancing, Zumba, or a yoga class with friends. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each week, or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise, as well as muscle-strengthening exercises on two or more days of the week.

Not smoking. Smoking damages the heart and blood vessels. It poses an even greater risk for women who use birth control pills.