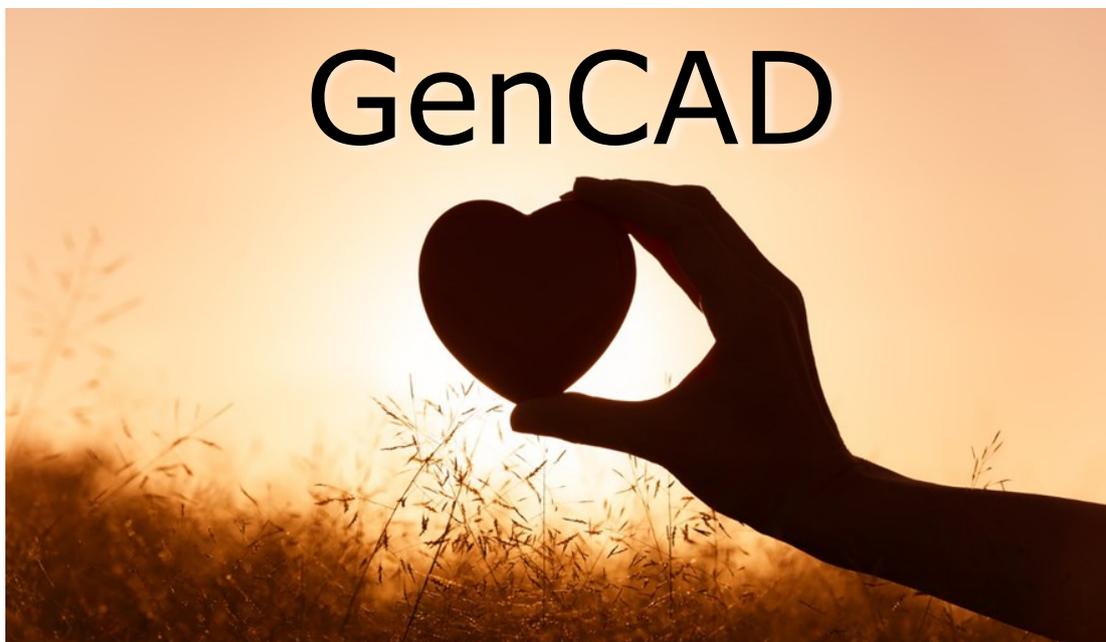




**How to protect your heart -
are women and men different?**



Prevention in women and men

What can women and men do to reduce their risk of coronary heart disease?

Be aware - Don't underestimate your risk, Women often do.

Know your normal values and take action if your values are higher:

Blood pressure: **optimal** <120/80 mmHg, pharmacotherapy is indicated when \geq 140/90 mmHg

Blood glucose level: \leq 100 mg/dl (5,6 mmol/l)

Blood lipid levels: LDL-Cholesterol \leq 115 mg/dl,

Waist circumference: women \leq 80 cm, men \leq 94 cm

- **Stay healthy** - Adopt a healthy lifestyle to reduce your risk of coronary heart disease
- **Quit or don't start smoking:** It is more difficult for women to stop smoking. Try to stop and get help if needed.
- **Exercise regularly:** Women and men can make big improvements to their heart health by exercising regularly. Take time e.g. 30 minutes per day (5 days a week) of walking.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Eat plenty of whole grains, a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats. Avoid saturated or trans-fat, added sugars, and especially salt. Maintain a normal weight for optimal health and longevity.
- **Alcohol:** limit your alcohol consumption.

- *Women and men should be aware of their risk of coronary heart disease.*
- *Women and men can prevent coronary heart disease by a healthy lifestyle.*
- *In some cases, drugs are needed.*



Heart attack symptoms and help seeking in women and men

Symptoms:

The most common heart attack symptom in women and men is pain, pressure or discomfort in the chest. It is not always be the most prominent symptom.

Women with heart attacks frequently experience other symptoms, in addition to or without chest pain, such as:

- Neck, jaw, shoulder, upper back or abdominal discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Pain in one or both arms
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sweating
- Light-headedness or dizziness
- Unusual fatigue

Help seeking: Because women often do not recognise they are having a heart attack, they tend to arrive later at hospitals than men.

- *Symptoms of a heart attack can differ in women and men.*
- *Women have more often a heart attack without chest pain.*



Diagnosis of coronary heart disease

The tests doctors choose to diagnose chronic coronary artery disease can differ in women and men.

Exercise testing and coronary angiography is usually used in men and is applicable for women if they have a number of risk factors and they can sufficiently exercise.

If women are younger, cannot exercise and have no other risk factors, alternative diagnostics may be preferred.

There are different ways to diagnose coronary heart disease, and your doctor can choose the most effective method.

Managing heart disease may differ in women and men

Drug therapy:

High blood pressure and high blood lipids should be equally treated in women and men.

Aspirin does not prevent coronary heart disease in healthy women below 65 years.

Hormone therapy after menopause does not prevent heart disease.

Drugs may act differently in women and men and they may have different adverse effects. Adverse effects are more frequent in women and should be reported to the doctor

What else can be done? — Interventions:

Both women and men can benefit greatly from invasive therapy e.g. catheters, balloon dilatations, cardiac surgery and advanced pacemakers. However, women are less frequently treated. Talk to your doctor.

Recovery and rehabilitation:

Women take longer to recover than men after a heart attack or surgery. This may be due to the early resumption of household activities, family care, and missing out on cardiac rehabilitation. It's important that both men and women go to cardiac rehabilitation.

- *Optimal doses and adverse effects of drugs may differ in women and men.*
- *Women and men benefit from surgery and modern interventions.*
- *Women need rehabilitation after myocardial infarction or surgery as do men*



In a nutshell

- ***Heart disease can be very different in women and men, in risks, symptoms, causes and diagnosis. Be aware - know your risk factors.***
- ***Exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet, maintain a healthy weight, and quit or don't start smoking. Be active.***
- ***There are various ways to diagnose heart problems. Listen to options - protect yourself from delayed diagnosis.***
- ***Best medications and doses may differ in women and men. Talk to your doctor.***
- ***Women and men benefit from cardiac interventions, surgery, pacemakers and cardiac rehabilitation.***

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