

Hey there, beautiful! 🌈 Before you dive in, a quick heads-up: this transcript is a super close-to-verbatim buddy from our podcast, but it's got its quirks! We didn't call the grammar cops on it, so you might bump into a typo or two. But hey, that just adds character, right? 😊 Embrace the wild side of language and enjoy the read! Happy exploring! 🚀



The Surprising Truth About HEART HEALTH Risks

Carmen Hecox: Let's say you own a pumpjack, you know, that thing that pumps oil out of the ground that has been known to overproduce several barrels of oil. In fact, this pumpjack has been financially providing for not just you, but also your family, your friends, employees, and anyone else who needs help. But as time moves on, this pumpjack is getting older and has not been fully maintenance. It has been occasionally dusted, received visual inspections, but no one is noticing that it has rust building up and some of the screws have fallen off. Every day, your pump jack is slowly producing less barrels of oil, but currently, not enough to draw too much attention.

But one day your pump jack stopped working. It's completely shut down. Guess what? That pump jack is your heart.

Heart Health Awareness Month

Carmen Hecox: Did you know February is heart health awareness month? In this episode, we will discuss signs and symptoms you shouldn't ignore and what you can do to take care of that beautiful heart of yours.

Did you know over one third of women who die in the U. S. each year die of heart disease? In fact, more women die of heart disease each year than that of breast cancer. And our risk increases after menopause.

Heart Attack Symptoms in Women

Carmen Hecox: What kind of symptoms do women get when they are having a heart attack?

Chest pain is the most common symptom in men and women, although women may have symptoms that may appear unrelated to a heart attack, like nausea, slight pain in the neck, or back.

Women usually describe their heart attack, chest pain as pressure or tightness, but believe it or not, it is possible to have a heart attack without chest pain.

Common symptoms women have when they are having a heart attack neck, jaw, shoulder, upper back pain, or upper stomach pain, shortness of breath, pain in one or both arms, nausea or vomiting, sweating, lightheaded or dizzy, unexplained fatigue, heartburn or indigestion.

These symptoms may be minor but have been known to appear more commonly than chest pain. In most cases, women experience symptoms more frequently when they are resting or sleeping.

Did you know that women can have a heart attack without artery blockage? This is considered an obstructive coronary artery disease.

Heart Disease Risk Factors

Carmen Hecox: What are heart disease risk factors?

High cholesterol. I'll dive deeper into understanding your cholesterol levels later.

High blood pressure. Normal blood pressure levels is less than 120 systolic and less than 80 diastolic. Elevated levels is 120 through 129 systolic and less than 80 diastolic. High blood pressure stage 1 is 130 to 139 systolic over 82, 89, diastolic,

Obesity, having a BMI greater than 25. If you'd like a free resource to help you figure out how many calories and food groups you should eat daily, I will add a link to the USDA My Plate link in the show notes. The My Plate website also has recipes and breaks down each different food group so that you don't get tired of eating the same foods over and over.

Smoking.

Lack of physical activity strive for at least 30 minutes of exercise, five or more days a week. And if you can gradually increase your time, that's just plain smart.

Stress and depression. Find ways of managing stress, like identifying and understanding what those stressors are and what events trigger additional stress. Practice daily relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, yoga, tai chi to calm your mind and body. Find or speak to a licensed therapist who can help you modify your thoughts and beliefs.

Diabetes. Your provider may order an A1C test or a blood glucose test. The A1C test, which measures your blood sugar levels for the past two to three months, should be 5.7 percent to be considered normal. 5.7 through 6.4 means you have prediabetes. If your provider orders a blood glucose test, it is recommended that you fast. That means no food for at least nine hours, but you can drink water before your test. Normal blood sugar is 99 mg or lower. A blood sugar level of 100 to 125 mg is considered prediabetes.

Menopause. When we go through menopause, this causes low levels of estrogen, which increases the risk of developing small vessel heart disease.

Family history of heart disease. If one of your immediate family members, that is parent, sibling, have had a heart attack, stroke, or were diagnosed with heart disease before the age of 60, this may indicate a family history of premature heart disease. This means your chances of developing the same condition may be higher than normal.

Other health conditions. This includes some autoimmune diseases like lupus, scleroderma, and inflammatory conditions.

Understanding Cholesterol

Carmen Hecox: Understanding your cholesterol.

I don't know about you, but when people talk about cholesterol and I hear LDL, HDL, which one's good, which one's bad, it just sounds like a different language to me.

So, I decided to break this down for myself and share it with some of you who are probably in the same boat.

LDL, this is considered bad cholesterol or low-density lipoprotein. The reason it's called or known as bad cholesterol is because high levels lead to buildup of cholesterol in your arteries.

You're probably wondering, what should my LDL level be? Well, I'm glad you asked; less than 100 mg is considered optimal. 100 through 129 mg is considered near optimal or above optimal and 130 to 159 is borderline high.

HDL, better known as good cholesterol or high-density lipoprotein. It's called good cholesterol because it helps your body get rid of extra cholesterol by transporting it back into your bloodstream, back into your liver. The liver will then break down this cholesterol and get it out of your body through your digestive system.

Ideally, your HDL should be 50 to 80 mg for women. As research shows, this can lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Triglycerides are the type of fat lipids found in the bloodstream. Their purpose is to store energy in fat cells, provide fuel for the body during fasting or exercise, and protect your organs and insulate your body.

Normal triglycerides levels varies depending on age, gender, and additional factors, but generally a level under 150 mg is considered healthy.

Total cholesterol is the total amount of cholesterol that is circulating in your blood. This includes LDL, HDL, and even though triglycerides are not considered a type of cholesterol, it still is measured in your total cholesterol.

Total cholesterol, healthy level is less than 200 mg, is within the optimal range. And 201 through 239 is considered borderline high.

In order to get the best cholesterol results, talk to your doctor about what foods you should avoid the night before, and if he or she would like you to fast before testing.

Steps to Reduce Heart Disease Risk

Carmen Hecox: So how do you reduce your risk of heart disease?

Step one, follow up with your doctor to discuss your risk. Ask them to check your blood pressure and order lab work to get your sugar levels and cholesterol check. If you have experienced any chest pains or any of the symptoms I described above, share that information with your provider so they can conduct additional testing like an EKG or an echocardiogram. If necessary, they may refer you to a cardiologist for a second opinion or additional testing.

Do not smoke or use any form of tobacco or cannabis.

Change your eating habits by incorporating healthy foods. If you are having trouble figuring out which foods are healthy, the My Plate website will help you learn how to read food labels and begin to incorporate healthy foods into your diet.

Exercise, maintain a healthy weight. Remember, we're striving for 30 minutes of daily exercise, five days a week, and maybe a little more when you are comfortable doing more.

Manage your stress and depression? Remember what we talked about before about digging deep into understanding what are the triggers that cause you stress and find healthy ways to manage that stress. And always talk with a licensed therapist.

Limit your alcohol consumption. For healthy adults, that means one drink for a woman and two drinks for a man per day. And if you can, I'd give up entirely.

Control your blood pressure, sugar, and cholesterol by making healthy lifestyle changes and taking your medications as directed and getting your regular checkups, you're off to your best new life.

Get good quality sleep. Strive for seven to nine hours per night daily. Trust me, your body and your brain will thank you for it.

And you know what? All the tips I provided will also help you manage your blood pressure, control your blood sugar and your cholesterol. So not only will you reduce your risk of heart disease, but it's a win-win all the way.

Conclusion and Additional Resources

Carmen Hecox: I hope today's episode has inspired you to focus on your heart health. If you'd like additional information or the link to my plate, head on over to createthebestme.com/ep102.

If you would like more tips to getting healthy and fit over 50, I'd recommend you watch or listen to "[Get Fit and Healthy Over 50](#)". You can click on the link here, or you'll find the link in my show notes.

And don't forget to come back next week, as my guest will be certified habit finder, coach, and author of "I See You", Amy Kemp. Amy will be here to provide so many amazing insights that will help you begin to create change in your life without feeling burned out. So, you'll have to come back next week. Until then, I'll see you next week. Bye.