

THE PATIENT PRESCRIPTION

Your Health Begins Here



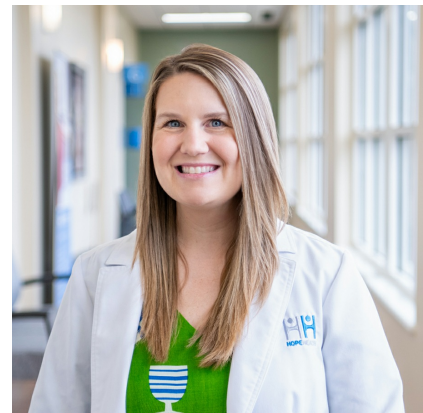
Quality Spotlight - Cardiovascular Health

HopeHealth's quality focus for February is cardiovascular health. This clinical focus includes measures like controlling high blood pressure, statins, and screening for aortic aneurysms. Below, read about women's cardiovascular health.

Heart-to-Heart: Understanding Cardiovascular Health For Women

Taylor Thompson, FNP-C

According to the CDC, cardiovascular disease has been ranked the leading cause of death among women in the United States for many years, surpassing all forms of cancer. Despite its prevalence, many women are unaware of their personal risk factors for developing heart disease and what symptoms they should look out for, which can differ from those experienced by men. Prioritizing heart health through education, prevention, and early detection is an essential component in improving patient outcomes.



While heart disease has historically been considered more common in males, women tend to be diagnosed later in life and have poorer outcomes. As a result, it is imperative to understand the risks of developing heart disease and what lifestyle changes may reduce those risks. Risk factors for heart disease among women include: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, stress, depression, family history, advanced age (most common to cause death among those aged 65 and older), certain autoimmune diseases (lupus and rheumatoid arthritis), and hormonal factors (PCOS, menopause, and pregnancy-related complications).

Although hormonal factors are often debated as to whether or not they play a significant role in women's heart health, most recent data suggests that hormones influence a woman's risk of heart disease throughout different life stages. Prior to menopause, higher levels of estrogen are thought to offer some protection against heart disease by improving blood vessel function and cholesterol balance. However, during menopause, when estrogen levels decrease, this protective mechanism is thought to diminish, leading to an increased risk of heart disease. Hormone

replacement therapy is also heavily debated, as it has been speculated to increase the risk of heart disease and stroke in some women when started later in life. Despite this, women suffering from menopausal symptoms should discuss their specific risks with their provider to determine whether or not the benefits of therapy outweigh the risks.

Women with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) typically experience insulin resistance, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, which all increase the risk of heart disease. The use of hormonal contraceptives may also elevate blood pressure and increase the risk of blood clots, especially in women who smoke, are overweight, or have other risk factors. Awareness and management of risk factors through lifestyle modifications and keeping up with regular health care appointments are crucial for reducing heart disease in women.

Emphasizing healthy lifestyle choices and managing chronic conditions can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease. The American Heart Association recommends engaging in 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity each week to support optimal cardiac function. Examples of moderate-intensity physical activity include brisk walking, water aerobics, dancing, gardening, tennis, and biking, while vigorous exercises include running, swimming laps, and weight training. If prolonged periods of physical activity are difficult at first, start out in small intervals throughout the day and work your way up to your goal.

Aside from increased physical activity, making healthy dietary choices is also an imperative component in reducing the risk of heart disease. Individual dietary choices should always be tailored to any underlying health conditions and personal health care goals, with the overall recommendation to focus on healthy, well-balanced meals with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy proteins (nuts, fish, lean meats), minimally-processed foods, and salt and sugar intake in moderation.

In addition to exercising and eating healthy, it is beneficial to stop unhealthy habits like smoking, drinking alcohol excessively, or using recreational drugs, as these things increase the risk of heart disease. Keeping up with regular health care appointments and managing chronic health conditions like high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, and stress through lifestyle changes and medication adherence are also vital to decreasing the risk of heart disease.

While understanding the risk of developing heart disease and how to manage those risks is important, it is also beneficial to understand that there are many different types of heart disease. Coronary artery disease, heart attack, arrhythmias, heart failure, valvular heart disease, congenital heart disease, cardiomyopathy, pericardial disease, aortic disease, rheumatic heart disease, and peripheral artery disease are all among the most commonly diagnosed heart conditions. While all cardiac concerns are serious, coronary artery disease, caused by plaque buildup in arteries that supply blood to the heart, is the leading cause of heart disease and can result in chest pain, heart attacks, or heart failure.

Heart attacks, which are generally the most feared heart condition, can occur when blood flow to a part of the heart is blocked, most often by a clot. Symptoms of heart attacks in women can vary from those experienced by men, leading to delayed diagnosis and treatment. Women may still experience classic symptoms of a heart attack, like chest pain or pressure. However, they are more likely than men to experience more subtle symptoms, such as shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting, pain in the back, neck, jaw, or stomach, dizziness or lightheadedness, unexplained fatigue, and cold sweats.

Knowing these subtle signs is critical, as immediate medical attention should be sought during a heart attack to increase the potential for timely treatment and optimized outcomes. Understanding all types of heart disease is important, and each type requires disease-specific diagnosis and treatment.

Prioritizing heart health is essential for women to ensure they are able to live long, healthy lives. By recognizing specific risk factors, understanding symptoms, and taking proactive steps toward prevention, women can significantly reduce their chances of developing heart disease. Regular check-ups, a balanced diet, frequent exercise, stress

management, and education about heart health are essential tools in combating heart disease. If you, or anyone you know, experiences a sudden onset of chest pain (pressure, squeezing, and/or tightness), shortness of breath, dizziness, vision changes, palpitations, sweating, or lightheadedness, you should report to your nearest emergency room for prompt evaluation.

Taylor Thompson is a family nurse practitioner who provides care for patients in the HopeXpress program for young adults and women's health care. She has a special interest in heart health, preventive care for younger adults, and keeping young adults in care. For more information, visit hope-health.org or call (843) 667-9414.

HopeHealth Pharmacy Greeleyville



In order to better serve our patients, we have added Greeleyville Pharmacy to our list of pharmacies!

HopeHealth Pharmacy Greeleyville is open **Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm and Saturday, 9am-12pm.** For more information, call (843) 426-2170.

Online Bill Pay

Did you know that you can conveniently and securely pay your HopeHealth bill online? You don't even have to be signed up for the patient portal. [Visit this link](#) or use the "Online Bill Pay" button on the home page of our website, hope-health.org.

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Dr. Behling Received 2025 Avant Institute Nexus Award

Dr. Ed Behling, Chief Medical Officer, was presented the 2025 Avant Institute Nexus Award at the recent symposium. The Avant Institute Nexus Award is presented each year during the annual symposium to an individual or organization that serves as a connector

for pharmacists and provider collaborations. Collaboration takes key relationships and connections to provide the opportunity for success.



Black History Month Spotlight: Dr. Matilda Evans

To honor Black History Month, let's spotlight one of many Black South Carolinians who made historic contributions to the medical field.

In 1897, **Dr. Matilda Evans** became the first Black woman to practice medicine in South Carolina. Born in Aiken, Dr. Evans attended the Schofield Normal School, which was devoted to the education of Black South Carolinians. She went on to found the Columbia Clinic Association, providing health services and health education to families.

In 1901, she opened the Taylor Lane Hospital and Training School, the first Black-owned hospital in Columbia. In 1922, Dr. Evans served as president of South Carolina's Palmetto Medical Association, becoming the first Black woman to hold such a position in any state of the country.

In the 1930s, Dr. Evans opened a free clinic to assist the South Carolinians experiencing poverty due to the Great Depression. She passed away in 1935 in Columbia, leaving behind a legacy of leadership in medicine, public health, education, philanthropy, and advocacy for the health rights of all South Carolinians.



Access Hope: After-Hours Care



Access Hope is our convenient after-hours program for patients to receive care when life doesn't go as planned.

Why HopeHealth Patients Use Access Hope:

- Your primary care provider isn't available when you're not feeling well
- You are sick after-hours or on Saturday
- You are a new patient whose busy schedule doesn't allow you to be seen during normal provider hours

Access Hope is available at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence
Monday-Saturday from 8am-8pm.

Examples of after-hours care services provided by Access Hope are minor aches and pains, cold and flu sick visits, treatment of high blood pressure, management of diabetes and other chronic conditions, immunizations/flu shots/PPD testing, urinalysis, annual and pre-employment physicals, and STD treatment.

For more information about Access Hope, [visit our website.](#)

An on-call provider is also available 24/7 for patients.

Free Community Classes



Visit hope-health.org/community/events to learn about and sign up for free community classes offered by HopeHealth! Topics range from healthy cooking to diabetes management, prioritizing movement, carbohydrate counting, and more.

Recipe Spotlight

Banana Brownies

In honor of Heart Month and Valentine's Day, we celebrate with chocolate! This simple recipe adds the heart-healthy benefits of unsweetened cocoa powder, along with bananas and peanut butter, for a delicious treat!

Makes 16 small brownies

Ingredients:

Dry Ingredients

- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¼ cup baking powder

Wet Ingredients

- 1 cup mashed banana (about 3 medium-sized bananas)
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 2 eggs
- 3-4 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Optional Add-Ins

- ¾ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips or caramel chips
- ½ cup chopped pecan or walnut pieces

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Lightly grease an 8-inch square pan and line it with parchment paper, allowing some paper to overhang on the sides.
2. In a large bowl, mix together the dry ingredients and set aside.
3. Mix the wet ingredients in a second large bowl. First, mash the bananas with the back of a fork. Then add the peanut butter, eggs, maple syrup, and vanilla extract, and mix well.
4. Stir the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients, and then fold in the chips and nuts, if desired.
5. Pour the batter into the square pan and bake for 20-25 minutes.
6. Remove from the oven and allow to cool to room temperature on a wire rack before slicing.



Notes:

- For softer, fudgy brownies, bake for 18-20 minutes.
- For firmer brownies, bake for 25 minutes.
- Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

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