



## American Heart Month

February is American Heart Month, and Friday, February 2 is [National Wear Red Day](#) to raise awareness of heart disease in women. Although heart disease is often thought of as a "man's disease," heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States.

The term "heart disease" covers a range of ailments: heart attacks, high blood pressure, congenital heart defects, heart failure, irregular heartbeats and cardiovascular disease (CVD). But what most people think of when they hear the term "heart disease" is coronary artery disease (CAD) and coronary heart disease (CHD), which mean the same thing: damage to the heart muscle from reduced blood flow. The most common cause of this damage is atherosclerosis, a condition in which fatty deposits called plaques accumulate inside arteries. If plaques enlarge, they can make it harder for blood and oxygen to get to and from the heart. A heart attack happens when blood flow is cut off to any area of the heart.



## Warning Signs to Know

While there are many similarities in the symptoms of heart disease in men and women, there are even more differences. Some women have no symptoms, while others may experience pain or discomfort in the chest area, or in the shoulder, neck, throat or jaw, or in the upper abdomen or back. Warning signs of heart disease include:

- **Heart Attack:** Chest pain or discomfort, upper back pain, indigestion, heartburn, nausea/vomiting, extreme fatigue, upper body discomfort, and shortness of breath.
- **Arrhythmia:** Fluttering feelings in the chest (palpitations).
- **Heart Failure:** Shortness of breath, fatigue, swelling of the feet/ankles/legs/abdomen.

## Risk Factors

High blood pressure, high LDL cholesterol, and smoking are key risk factors for heart disease. Other risk factors include:

- Diabetes
- Being overweight or obese
- Poor diet
- Physical inactivity
- Excessive alcohol use
- Smoking

Screening for heart disease generally includes regular blood pressure checks, exercising, making healthy food choices, managing chronic conditions such as diabetes, and controlling "bad" cholesterol levels. [Click here](#) for more information on reducing your risk of heart disease.

**Are you concerned about a friend or family member's health? If you, or someone you know, is interested in addiction recovery services, mental health care for children or adults, or primary care, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.**

