



BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

MARY HARRIGAN CONNORS CENTER
FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH AND GENDER BIOLOGY

CENTER *for* ———
CARDIOVASCULAR
DISEASE
————— *in* WOMEN



HARVARD
MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING AFFILIATE



BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

The Center for Cardiovascular Disease in Women at Brigham and Women's Hospital is dedicated to increasing awareness of heart disease in women and developing new strategies for the prevention and treatment of heart disease in women.

The Center is committed to improving and maintaining the cardiovascular health of women and their families through:

- excellence in clinical care;
- research;
- patient and provider education; and
- community outreach and advocacy.

The Center serves all women with or at risk for coronary heart disease, with special attention to underserved populations including women of color, low-income women and elderly women.

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in women, and is largely preventable through lifestyle modifications including eating a healthy diet, engaging in regular physical activity, quitting smoking, and reducing and managing stress levels. Even if already present, new technologies and advances in care enable doctors at Brigham and Women's Hospital to help women improve their heart health.

LEADING THE WAY IN WOMEN'S CARDIAC CARE

The Center for Cardiovascular Disease in Women has established several initiatives to learn more about cardiac care for women and to educate women about their own heart disease risks and what they can do to prevent the disease.

Current activities of the Center involve:

- Developing innovative clinical programs and interventions;
- Conducting and promoting research for a gender-specific approach to cardiovascular risk reduction;
- Developing culturally-appropriate educational materials;
- Conducting outreach and partnering with community-based organizations to build programs that improve heart health in local communities;
- Developing policy and advocacy efforts to effect change in public health policy to improve cardiovascular health for women.

CLINICAL CARE

Our clinical programs focus on prevention and treatment of heart disease that combine the most up-to-date findings and procedures with an approach that treats women in the context of their lives.

Our clinical programs include:

Prevention: Brigham and Women's Hospital is the home of the Nurses' Health Study, which has led to key findings in the area of women's heart health. This study indicates that women can prevent up to 80 percent of cardiovascular disease, including heart disease and stroke, by living a healthy lifestyle and treating risk factors aggressively. Our program has translated this groundbreaking research into a program that helps women decrease their risk of cardiovascular disease.

Program for Arrhythmias and Women: The Program for Arrhythmias and Women specializes in diagnosing and treating abnormal heart rhythms in women, especially those that are more common in women. Atrial fibrillation, a common abnormal heart rhythm, can affect patients' quality-of-life, possibly leading to heart damage or a cardiac event. Often these conditions are misdiagnosed.

Cardiac Intervention: There are times when more aggressive treatment of heart disease is required. Brigham and Women's Hospital is a leader in invasive treatment of heart disease, including cardiac and vascular surgery, and an innovator in minimally invasive surgical techniques. Women have a higher risk for certain valvular diseases compared with men, and these minimally invasive techniques are particularly important for women given their smaller size.

OUR RESEARCH

Researchers with the Center are developing and enhancing sex- and gender-specific research of heart disease in women, translating that research into improved care and treatment.

Understanding Needs of Women: The Center conducted focus groups with women from a wide range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds who have coronary heart disease (CHD), or known risk for developing CHD, to determine needs and preferences for cardiology care.

- Most of the women had an acute knowledge of CHD and understood how to manage their risk factors.
- Women found behavior modifications, including increased physical activity and eating a healthier diet, difficult to incorporate into their everyday life.
- There is a need for gender-specific programs to educate and promote heart healthy lifestyles for women.

Healthy Heart Initiative: Focusing on black and Latina women living in two Boston neighborhoods, the Healthy Heart Initiative was designed to develop and evaluate strategies for nutrition and exercise education to increase heart healthy behaviors.

A central aim of the program is to assess the feasibility of purchasing foods for a culturally appropriate, high quality, heart healthy diet in target communities.

EDUCATION, OUTREACH AND POLICY INITIATIVES

Education Programs

The goal of the educational program is to develop programs and materials that empower women to take control of their own health.

Educational materials include:

- *Prescription for Education:* an educational prescription pad that outlines risk reduction strategies;
- *Common Medications for Patients with Heart Disease:* a guide that outlines the purpose and use of various heart disease medications; and
- *Heart Disease Risk Assessment:* an online risk assessment for women to determine their risk of heart disease (www.brighamandwomens.org/heartrisk) developed in partnership with the Boston Heart Party.

Educational outreach programs include:

- *Sister Talk 2:* The Center for Cardiovascular Disease in Women, in collaboration with Boston Neighborhood Network Television, the Boston Public Health Commission, Brigham and Women's Hospital Office for Women, Family and Community Programs, and Partners HealthCare, developed Sister Talk 2, a cable TV program

designed to educate and inform black women about issues of heart disease and disease prevention.

- *To the Heart of Minority Women:* This curriculum is designed to help black and Latina women build the skills they need to make simple, practical, and lasting changes to help them fight heart disease for themselves and their families. This program was developed in partnership with Harvard Medical School's Center of Excellence in Women's Health.

Outreach Efforts

The Center works closely with community groups to increase outreach and awareness of the impact of heart disease on the health of women. This includes:

- Developing Public Service Announcements with Boston media partner WCVB-TV Channel 5;
- Working with state and local public health departments on cardiovascular health initiatives;
- Participating in the annual Brigham and Women's Hospital Women's Health Forum: *Mothers, Daughters, Sisters and Friends: Health Issues for Women of All Ages* serving over 600 women.

Addressing Policy

The goal of the policy and advocacy program is to influence public policy and increase public awareness and support for strategies to reduce heart disease in women.

In 2003, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Partners HealthCare System conducted a briefing on women's health for Massachusetts state legislative leaders, educating and heightening awareness among policymakers of ways to improve the heart health of women.

Recommendations included:

- Enhancing public information, health education and prevention efforts;
- Maximizing funding for tobacco prevention and smoking cessation programs;
- Promoting public and private insurance coverage for smoking cessation aids;
- Developing and implementing policies that encourage private and public health insurance plans to cover cardiovascular disease self-management programs and address the gender-specific strategies that lead to success;
- Improving access to healthy food sources for low-income families;
- Strengthening physical education requirements and ensuring access to nutritious foods in schools;
- Enhancing research in gender disparities in coronary heart disease treatment; and
- Ensuring adequate funding for screening, diagnosis and treatment of uninsured residents.

LEADERSHIP



PAULA A. JOHNSON, MD, MPH
Chief, Division of Women's Health

Executive Director, Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology,

Director, Center for Cardiovascular Disease in Women;

Associate Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School

Clinical Background:

MD Degree:

Harvard Medical School

Residency:

Brigham and Women's Hospital, Internal Medicine

Fellowship:

Brigham and Women's Hospital, Cardiology

Board Certifications:

Cardiology, Internal Medicine

Clinical Interests:

Cardiovascular disease in women

More Information

If you would like additional heart health information, including our guide “*Women and Cardiovascular Disease*”, call **(800) BWH-9999**, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or visit our website at

www.brighamandwomens.org/cardiovascular-disease.

HEART DISEASE RISK AND LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS

There are several factors that place a woman at increased risk for heart disease. Some risk factors you cannot change, including family history of heart disease and increasing age. Fortunately, there are many risk factors that you can change:

- High blood pressure (pressure over 140/90)
- High cholesterol levels (based on your individual risk factors)
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Being overweight
- Limited physical activity
- Stress

The steps you can take today to decrease your risk include:

- Stop smoking cigarettes
- Engage in moderate or vigorous exercise at least 30 minutes each day
- Eat a healthy diet
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- If you have high blood pressure, make sure it is controlled
- Know your lipid profile (HDL and LDL cholesterol and triglycerides)
- If you have diabetes, know your blood sugar level
- Work to reduce and manage your stress

You do not have to do this alone. You should discuss your individual risk with your health care provider and together you can make a plan to decrease your risk for heart disease.

DIRECTIONS TO BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL AT 75 FRANCIS STREET

FROM THE NORTH:

Head South on Route 93. Take Storrow Drive west. Take the Fenway/Route 1 South exit (on left). At lights, bear right onto Boylston Street. At third set of lights, bear left onto Brookline Avenue. At fifth set of lights, turn left onto Francis Street. The Hospital is one block down on the left.

FROM THE WEST:

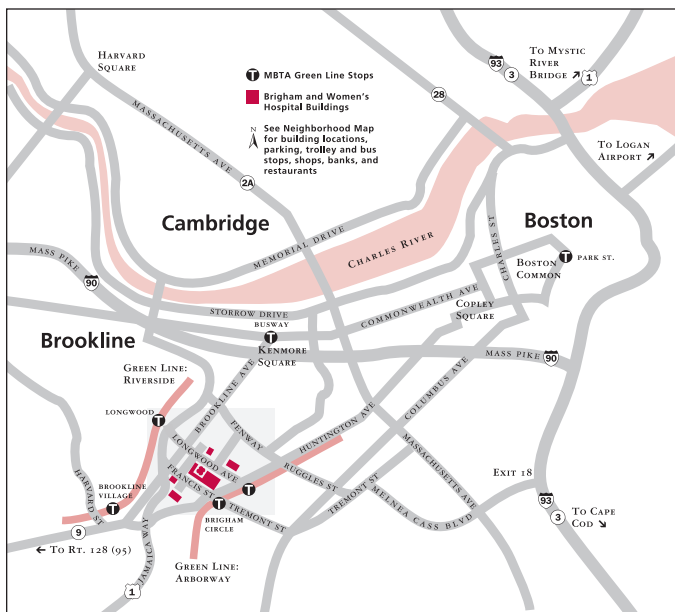
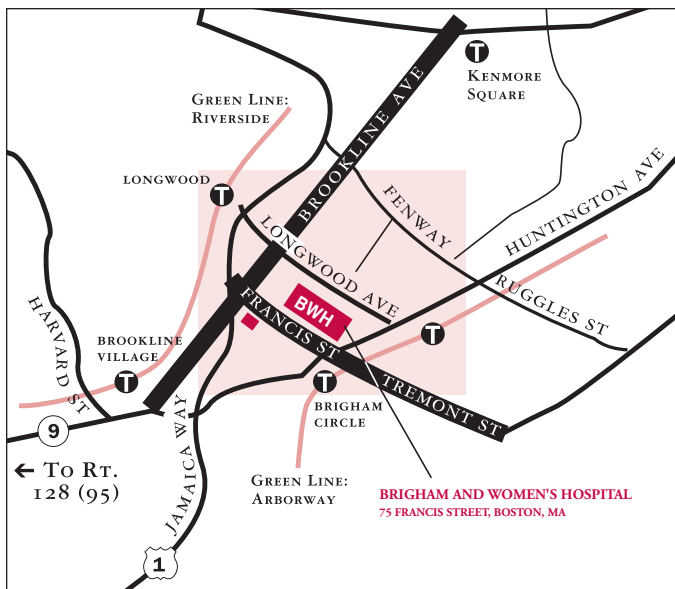
Head east on Massachusetts Turnpike. Take Route 128 (I-95) south for approximately one mile. Take Route 9 east for six miles. Take a left onto Brookline Avenue (Brook House Condominiums will be on right). At third set of lights, turn right onto Francis Street. The Hospital is one block down on the left.

—or—

Stay on Massachusetts Turnpike east. Take Huntington Avenue/Copley Square/Prudential Center exit, and bear left toward the Prudential. Follow Huntington Avenue west for approximately three miles. Turn right onto Francis Street at Brigham Circle.

FROM THE SOUTH:

Head north on Route 3 (Southeast Expressway). Take Massachusetts Avenue/Roxbury exit. At end of ramp, cross Massachusetts Avenue onto Melnea Cass Boulevard. At the 8th traffic light, take left onto Tremont Street. Take first right onto Ruggles Street. Turn left onto Huntington Avenue at intersection with Ruggles Street. At second set of lights (Brigham Circle), turn right onto Francis Street. The Hospital is one block down on right.





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WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

**CENTER FOR CARDIOVASCULAR
DISEASE IN WOMEN**

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BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S/FAULKNER HOSPITALS

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