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# **MY HEALTH IS OUR HEALTH: PREGNANCY & HEART HEALTH**



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Kick off your program with a warm welcome and your opening remarks. This could include an inspiring quote or reading or share with the group why this topic is important to you and your reason for offering to host this lesson.



## PREGNANCY & HEART HEALTH | LESSON OVERVIEW

### Welcome

- What is Go Red for Women?
- Why does heart health matter during pregnancy?

### Health Lesson

- Before pregnancy: Getting healthy and know your risk factors
- During pregnancy: Learn the symptoms of heart problems
- After pregnancy: Take care of yourself and your baby
- Some pregnancy-related conditions can increase your cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk during pregnancy and later in life

### Closing Thoughts

- Call to action



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## WHAT IS GO RED FOR WOMEN?

**Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in women, claiming the lives of 1 in 3.**

For more than two decades, the American Heart Association's signature women's initiative, Go Red for Women®, has harnessed the energy, passion and power of women to band together to wipe out their greatest health threat. Go Red for Women is a comprehensive platform designed to increase women's heart health awareness, accelerate science and research, improve access to care and serve as a catalyst for change to improve the lives of women globally.

Why? Because losing even one woman to heart disease or stroke is too many.



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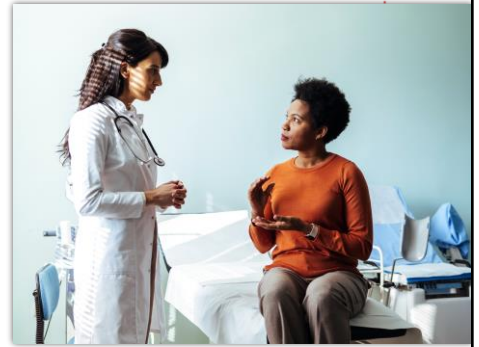


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## WHY HEART HEALTH & PREGNANCY MATTER

- Overall, 10% to 20% of women will have a health issue during pregnancy.
- Some pregnancy problems are linked to increased CVD risk later in life:
  - High blood pressure (67% higher risk)
  - Preeclampsia (2x higher risk of death from CVD)
  - Gestational diabetes (68% higher risk)
- Talk to your health care professional about conditions you had during past pregnancies and how they could affect your risk.



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Let's look at why heart health matters in pregnancy



## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

### You'll be able to share with family and friends:

- How to stay healthy before, during and after pregnancy
- The CVD risk factors and the signs and symptoms to look for during pregnancy
- The stroke risk factors and symptoms to look for during pregnancy
- Access resources for before, during and after pregnancy here:  
[GoRedforWomen.org/Pregnancy](https://www.GoRedforWomen.org/Pregnancy)



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## HOW ARE PREGNANCY AND HEART HEALTH RELATED?

- Pregnancy is “nature’s stress test.” It can be a window into a woman’s future health risks.
- Pregnancy adds extra strain on a woman’s heart and blood vessels. This can lead to CVD and other health problems.

[GoRedforWomen.org/Pregnancy](https://www.GoRedforWomen.org/Pregnancy)



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## WHAT CAN PUT YOU AT RISK?

- Research shows that less than half of women are in good heart health before pregnancy.
- There are four key risk factors for cardiovascular disease:
  - Age
  - Weight
  - High blood pressure (hypertension)
  - Race
- You cannot change your age or race, but you can manage your blood pressure and weight.



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## WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

- Blood pressure measures how hard blood pushes against the blood vessel walls.
- This blood pressure causes your blood to flow to all parts of your body.
- Talk to your health care professional about managing your blood pressure if:
  - You have a family history of high blood pressure
  - You are pregnant or are considering becoming pregnant



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## HEALTHY MOMS

- High blood pressure is diagnosed by a health care professional when there are high readings over time.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (top/upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (bottom/lower number)
NON-HYPERTENSIVE	LESS THAN 140	and	LESS THAN 90
HYPERTENSION IN PREGNANCY*	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
SEVERE HYPERTENSION* (If you don't have symptoms, call your health care professional immediately)	160 OR HIGHER	or	110 OR HIGHER

- If you have any of these symptoms, call 911: severe headache, change in vision, abdominal pain, chest pain, significant swelling, or shortness of breath

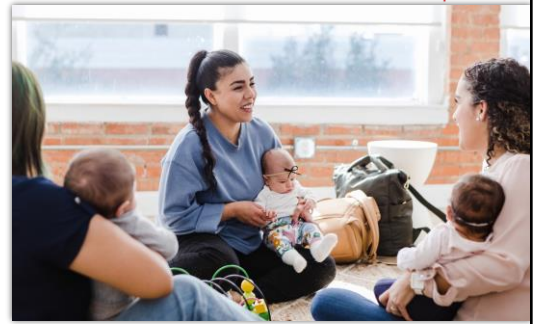


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## HEALTHY MOMS

- **Before pregnancy:** getting healthy and know your risk factors
- **During your pregnancy:** learn the symptoms of heart problems
- **After pregnancy:** take care of yourself and your baby



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## BEFORE PREGNANCY: GETTING HEALTHY

- Improving your heart health before pregnancy can reduce medical risks later.
- Follow these four tips to get ready:
  - Find a good health care professional.
  - Know the risk factors for heart problems.
  - Make healthier choices:
    - Stay physically active
    - Eat heart-healthy foods
    - Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke
    - Get enough sleep
    - Manage stress
  - Manage medical conditions before pregnancy.
- Talk to your health care professional about your family health history.



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## **DURING PREGNANCY: STAYING HEALTHY WHILE PREGNANT**

- The healthy habits recommended before pregnancy remain the same:
  - Eat healthy
  - Get exercise
  - Manage stress
  - Control blood pressure
- Talk to your health care professional about your needs, health history and concerns you have.
- Regularly monitor your blood pressure at home.



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## **DURING PREGNANCY: MAKING HEART HEALTH & WELLNESS A PRIORITY**

- Make your heart health and overall wellness a priority.
  - **Visit your health care professional regularly.**
    - Monthly visits are normal up to 28 weeks. Then, visits will increase to every two weeks or weekly.
    - Follow your health care team's advice.
  - **Take medication as prescribed.** Never stop taking your medications without approval from your healthcare professional. Ask what to do if you miss a dose.
  - **Reduce stress and manage anxiety.** Some ways to relax include meditating, spending time in nature and enjoying hobbies.



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## DURING PREGNANCY: HOW TO PREVENT PREGNANCY COMPLICATIONS

- **Monitor weight gain.** Your health care professional will tell you how much weight gain is safe based on your body mass index (BMI) before pregnancy. Women with BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 who are pregnant with one baby are normally expected to gain 25 to 35 pounds. The range is higher if you are carrying more than one baby.
- **Avoid unhealthy habits.** Such as smoking, drinking alcohol and using illegal drugs.
- **If you're over 35, take extra care.** Be aware of the increased risks, stay active and get early, and on-going medical care.



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## **DURING PREGNANCY: WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL**

- It's important to monitor your health as well as your baby's.
- Contact your health care team about symptoms such as:
  - Bleeding
  - Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
  - Heart palpitations, increased heart rate or irregular heartbeat
  - Chest pain
  - Fever
  - Severe nausea or stomach pain
  - Persistent and intense headache
  - A bloody cough or coughing at night
  - Vision problems
  - Changes in mental health



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## **DURING PREGNANCY: PREGNANCY-RELATED CONDITIONS**

- Some conditions that can happen during pregnancy or after delivery include:
  - High blood pressure
  - Gestational hypertension
  - Preeclampsia
  - Eclampsia
  - Gestational diabetes
  - Stroke
  - Peripartum cardiomyopathy (PPCM)
  - Heart valve disease
- Know your risk factors, monitor your symptoms and talk to your health care professional about any concerns.



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## **AFTER PREGNANCY: CARING FOR YOURSELF**

- Many heart-related problems can happen in the days and weeks after delivery — even up to a year later.
- New moms have a lot to juggle. But it's also a key time to stay on top of your health.

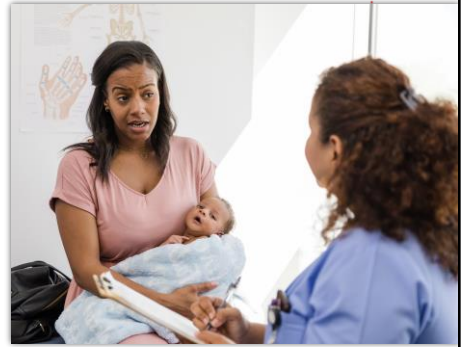


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## AFTER PREGNANCY: CARING FOR YOURSELF

- **Some symptoms, such as fatigue and mild pain, are expected after childbirth.** Strange or sudden changes may be a symptom of stroke, heart problems or other conditions.
- **Get continued medical care.** Take time for all medical appointments, even after pregnancy. Care after giving birth is important.
- **Monitoring your blood pressure.** There are often no symptoms with high blood pressure. It's important to check your blood pressure postpartum, especially if you have had high blood pressure before pregnancy and during.
- **Go to your follow-up visits.** Women with high blood pressure or heart disease should have a follow-up visit within 10 to 14 days of delivery. This can be with your primary care professional or heart doctor.



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## **AFTER PREGNANCY: SIGNS OF TROUBLE AFTER DELIVERY**

- Get medical help right away if you have:
  - Extreme headache
  - Dizziness
  - Vision changes
  - Fever of 100.4 or higher
  - Swelling in the hands or face
  - Bleeding
  - Chest pain
  - Severe swelling, redness or pain in a leg or arm
  - Mental health issues
  - Serious heart issues after delivery



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## AFTER PREGNANCY: WELLNESS TIPS FOR NEW MOMS

- **Make your health a priority.** Manage medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, and be aware of health changes.
- **Tell new health care professionals about your pregnancy.** Discuss any problems with your pregnancy or delivery with them. They will use this health history to help treat any issues that may arise.
- **Monitor mental health.** Changes to your body after pregnancy can affect your mental and social well-being. Seek urgent help if you feel depressed or are at risk of harming yourself or your baby.



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## AFTER PREGNANCY: WELLNESS TIPS FOR NEW MOMS

- **Find ways to be active.** Your health care team will tell you when it's safe to exercise. Most women begin with walking, stretching and other light exercise. It's important to monitor progress and adapt to your changing body.
- **Find time to sleep.** Lack of sleep is common after childbirth and can increase your risk of depression.
- **Eat nutritious foods.** If you're breastfeeding, making healthy food choices is even more important.
- **Rely on a support network.** Ask for help and reduce the items on your to-do list.



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## **AFTER PREGNANCY: SIGNS OF TROUBLE AFTER DELIVERY**

- Life-threatening heart conditions that can happen after delivery include:
  - Stroke
  - Peripartum cardiomyopathy (PPCM), a form of heart failure
  - Aortic dissection, a tear in the wall of an aorta
- If you have concerns about your physical or mental health, call your health care professional right away.



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## CALL TO ACTION

- Talk to your health care professional before, during and after pregnancy.
- Review our resources on tips to stay healthy before, during and after pregnancy at [GoRedforWomen.org/Pregnancy](https://GoRedforWomen.org/Pregnancy).
- The AHA has launched a free, online forum for women with pregnancy-related conditions and their loved ones. Find answers and get support from others with similar conditions at: [heart.org/SupportNetwork](https://heart.org/SupportNetwork).



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