What are signs of a heart attack for women?
Chest tightness, chest pain, indigestion, shoulder pain, jaw pain, and sweating can all be signs of heart attack in women. Due to the fact that some of these symptoms are not traditionally associated with heart attack, Dr. Speck suggested that women should be aware of their own personal risks and think "heart first, not last." Personal risk factors to discuss with your physician include your cholesterol, blood pressure, family history of heart disease, and if you have diabetes.

Why are women more at risk for heart disease?
As women enter menopause their bodies can change despite their lifestyle habits, increasing risk factors of heart disease. For example, menopause can predispose some women to have higher blood pressure and therefore an increased risk for heart attack or stroke. Pregnancy complications, such as miscarriage or pre-term labor, may also increase a woman’s risk of heart disease during menopause.

What lifestyle habits are the most important to heart health?
Exercise and diet are two lifestyle habits that support heart health. Drs. Dunsmoor-Su and Speck recommended moderate aerobic exercise for at least 30 minutes a day in addition to light strength training to support bone health. Although one specific diet may not work for all women, examples of heart healthy diets include the Mediterranean and plant-based diet. With about 80 percent of cardiovascular disease being preventable, it is never too late to make lifestyle changes that contribute to your heart health.

What is “HRT” and can it cause heart attacks and stroke?
“HRT” or Hormone Replacement Therapy is used to treat menopause symptoms that are caused by changes in estrogen levels. Some women may also start HRT at the onset of menopause to lower their risk of cardiovascular events. Dr. Dunsmoor-Su shared that a poor understanding of the risk to benefits ratio has led to the misconception that HRT is unsafe for women. While taking estrogen may increase blood clots in some women, the benefits can outweigh the risk if you are experiencing severe menopausal symptoms or have family history of heart disease. Work with your physician to decide if HRT is right for you.

Key Highlights:

**What are signs of a heart attack for women?**
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