



**American Academy of Nursing Releases Policy Brief on
Increased Cardiovascular Risk in Young Women**

Increased Cardiovascular Mortality Rates in Young Women Demand Attention

Washington, D.C. (August 6, 2018) — The American Academy of Nursing today released a policy brief focusing attention on two decades of increased cardiovascular mortality in young women ages 35 to 54 years of age. The brief's recommendations address the risk, which is often neglected by young females and providers alike.

Heart disease remains the number one killer of women, but attention to heart health by young females and providers alike is often neglected because of the misperception that cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk is low in this population. However, recent reports over an eight year period show a doubling of CVD risk factors (hypertension, diabetes, lipid disorders, obesity, tobacco use, physical inactivity, family history) in women ages 35 to 64. The doubling of CVD risk factors is significant since the rate of cardiovascular mortality is 88% higher in young women with two or more risk factors than in young women with no risk factors. The increase in obesity and Type 2 diabetes is believed to account in large part for the rise of CVD in young women. Race, physical activity level, and sex-specific differences are three additional factors.

The Academy's policy brief, "Assessing and Addressing Cardiovascular Risk in Young Women," was published in the May/June 2018 issue of the Academy's journal, *Nursing Outlook*.

"It is imperative that these findings concerning cardiovascular disease in young women be well-circulated among providers who, in turn, must share this information with their female patients," said Academy President Karen Cox, PhD, RN, FAAN. "Women have long been underrepresented in clinical research. These unexpected findings confirm the need to expand the numbers, ages, and racial diversity of women represented in clinical studies."

To support cardiovascular health in young women and reduce rising mortality rates, the Academy recommends increased NIH funding for research and patient outreach programs on lifestyle and self-management; heightened focus by health-care systems to improve the alignment of clinicians' rates of practice with clinical guidelines on known CVD risk factors; effective partnerships among primary care professionals and specialists in women's health and cardiovascular disease; and additional nurse-led initiatives targeted to increase women's accurate perceptions of CVD risk and promote healthy lifestyle skills.

Read the full policy brief: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2018.04.005>.

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