



The Women's Wellness Series promotes our vision of the **Women's Wellness and Gyn Specialty Services**. An extension of Swedish, the center will provide comprehensive care for women at every stage of life, including primary care and behavioral health, wellness and prevention, and specialty and surgical care. We are grateful to Drs. Dunsmoor-Su and Speck for an educational discussion on women's heart health as we age. Please find below their contact information and key highlights from the discussion.

#### **Rebecca Dunsmoor-Su, M.D.**

Located at Swedish First Hill, Dr. Dunsmoor-Su's focus is on gynecology, specifically on vulva vaginal specialties and menopause.  
To schedule an appointment: 206-215-6300

#### **Sarah Speck, M.D.**

Located at Speck Health, Dr. Speck's focus is on cardiac wellness and rehabilitation.  
To schedule an appointment: 206-466-5936

### **Key Highlights:**

#### **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.