

How Carrie Fisher's Death Is Empowering Women To Protect Against The Risk Of Heart Disease

By **Niamh O'Kennedy** - January 9, 2017



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***"WELL I GUESS YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT WOMEN
YET"***

Princess Leia, The Empire Strikes Back

The majority of women consider cardiovascular disease to be a man's problem – probably a middle aged, overweight man who has high blood pressure/cholesterol, diabetes and drinks or smokes. But, as Carrie Fisher's death on 27 December 2016 (followed by her own mother's stroke just a day later) has highlighted, the reality is that women, at certain times in their lives, are at even greater risk than men and need to be better prepared.

In the UK, heart and circulatory disease kills more than 82,000 women, compared with 79,000 men, each year. An average of 8 women per hour visit hospital following a heart attack and 77 women die per day. So why are women at risk and how can they better protect themselves with [Fruitflow+ Omega-3](#)?



Photo Credit: Fruitflow

"MUCH TO LEARN, YOU STILL HAVE"

Yoda, Attack of the Clones

Many take blood flow for granted and think that if their heart is pumping then their blood must be pumping smoothly too. But this is NOT always the case and women's blood flow is more prone to problems than men.

Women and men differ when it comes to their blood platelets. Women have more and these tend to become stickier more easily (which can cause clotting). Whilst we are all prone to sticky platelets with blood flow heavily influenced by our lifestyles (exercise levels, diet, stress etc), our age and hormonal factors; women's platelets tend to respond more strongly to lifestyle and diet stress than men's. Plus hormonal factors are more prevalent in women (due to menstruation, pregnancy and menopause).

The most obvious times when women's platelets are stickier is mid-menstrual cycle; in women who take a contraceptive based on progesterone; during pregnancy and post

menopause. Interestingly, although the risk of cardiovascular disease increases for everyone as they get older, the increase is more age-dependent in women than in men. Pre-menopause, women generally have a lower risk than men of equivalent age. Post-menopause, this risk increases faster for women than for men. An overall increase in heart attacks is seen for women ten years after menopause.

The change is linked to the effects of the hormone oestrogen on platelets and the body's natural platelet control systems. As oestrogen levels drop over the course of the menopause, the body produces less prostacyclin and less of the natural molecule nitric oxide (NO), responsible for calming blood platelets which allows blood to flow smoothly and keeps blood vessels relaxed, which controls blood pressure. As this natural cardioprotection decreases, it accelerates the risk of heart disease, raises blood pressure, and can cause dangerous blood clots. The platelets themselves also stop producing an oestrogen receptor, which alters the way they are produced, their lifetime, and their numbers. And finally, during menopause, women often get heavier; LDL ('bad') cholesterol will go up and HDL ('good') cholesterol will come down.

Whilst HRT can reverse some of these effects (most notably on platelet numbers and NO production – which can help restore the body's natural antiplatelet defences), HRT does not reverse all the platelet changes, so platelets are still stickier than before, and can contribute to thrombosis /DVT.



Photo Credit: Fruitflow

“THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH THIS ONE”

Darth Vader, A New Hope.

So what can women do to protect themselves? It's recommended that all women over the age of 40 visit their GP for a health check – to get their blood pressure, blood sugars and cholesterol levels measured.

In addition to a healthy diet and exercise (and eliminating unhealthy habits like smoking), understanding and managing blood flow is a vital step in maintaining cardiovascular health. People know about cholesterol and blood pressure but there is little information on how to keep your blood flow healthy. But, taking care of it when you're younger, can ensure it will continue to flow smoothly into old age.

Scientific research has shown that just one capsule of [Fruitflow®+ Omega-3](#), taken daily, will help maintain normal blood flow and a healthy heart. It can help to fill the gap in our natural defences as it works to smooth the blood platelets, and so helps to protect against their hyperactivity and unwanted blood clots.

Above all though, women must be aware of the symptoms of a heart attack as it can present differently in women and they tend to wait longer before calling 999 (due to their higher pain threshold as oestrogen is an effective anti-pain agent). Learn more [here](#).

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