



Healthy Her

Should Dentists Be a Part of Women's Heart Health?...You Betcha!

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Women often present with heart attack symptoms that are far different than what you may have learned. This means that we may not have the crushing chest pain, chest pressure, shortness of breath, dizziness, or loss of consciousness that alerts both you and those around you that something serious is happening. No, our symptoms may be more subtle.

Symptoms such as fatigue (just feel tired), or decreased stamina (takes more effort to climb those stairs), back pain, nausea, and even jaw pain, are often more common presenting symptoms of a heart attack in women. It is the jaw pain in fact, that takes women to the Dentist for an evaluation of their teeth. This is the missed opportunity at the Dentist's office.

Many Dentists now will take a blood pressure on their patients prior to the visit. This can be the first clue to a Dentist that the patient before them with jaw pain does not have an oral issue, but a pending heart attack. This is because, the blood pressure can be high.

Second indicator is the oral evaluation by the Dentist finds nothing seriously wrong in her mouth. Soooo, she is sent home with reassurances when in fact, she may continue having her heart attack unbeknownst to the Dentist or the patient. This is because our symptoms of heart disease (those of a woman) are not taught to us. In fact, even in medical training, we are taught that a woman's symptoms are often categorized as 'atypical'. Atypical chest pain. Atypical presentation.

But the fact of the matter is that we (women) comprise more than 51% of the population, so our symptoms are not only NOT atypical, they are in fact more of the norm. But the health system has not been trained and neither have we.

So, for all the Dentists out there. If your female patient has jaw pain (especially if she is perimenopausal or older, i.e. 36 years and up) and you find nothing wrong with them... Do not send them home. Rather, send them to the ER for a cardiac evaluation. You may just save a woman's life.

See my social media **Stairwell Chronicles** here for a 60 second recap:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVd0TdQEf5e/?igsh=MTclajZ6cWx5a2xjMw==>

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