

Heart & Stroke Presents...

Webinar Key Messages



Title: Sex & Gender Differences in the Risk Management of COVID-19

Webinar date: April 16, 2020

Webinar Overview

Information on sex and gender differences regarding the risk of developing, and the severity of COVID-19 is emerging. This information is generating questions and concerns about disease prevention and management. This webinar offered a timely overview on COVID-19 and how it is impacting men and women differently, while hearing from lived experience, research and health professional perspectives.

View sex and gender differences during COVID-19 [webinar here](#).

Please also refer to www.heartandstroke.ca/women

Nicole Nickerson, *Middle LaHave, NS*

Perspectives from a woman with lived heart disease experience

Nicole shared the following ways she manages her heart disease and well-being during COVID-19:

- Stay in contact with your healthcare team and peers going through similar experiences; Heart & Stroke's *Community of Survivors* is a helpful peer support resource. [Click here](#).
- Do not stop taking your medications unless you have spoken with your Doctor.
- Try to maintain healthy eating habits and stay active—but it's ok if you have an off day.
- Take time and rest for yourself; especially for the women who are mothers and working in essential services. We are trying to manage so much so we need to take care of ourselves too.
- Don't believe everything you read on the internet, [Heart & Stroke](#) and the [Ottawa Heart Institute](#) are two reliable sources where I get my information.
- **Listen to your body, go get checked out if you think something is wrong; call 9-1-1 if you are having a heart attack or stroke—do not delay.**

Nicole's strategies for managing with having a family based in healthcare/ an essential service:

- Plan ahead in case of quarantine, or in case of another heart attack or stroke.
 - **Tip:** Have all your contact and medical information handy on your cell phone or near a home phone so people can easily access all the necessary information.
- Don't be scared to ask for help; and stay virtually connected to your friends & family.
- Staying up to date on emerging information around COVID-19.

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- **Tips Nicole uses for talking to her children about COVID-19:**

- Being honest with the kids and sharing information as I learn of it myself
- Using available resources and taking the time to teach the kids about the importance of hand washing, health eating, etc.
- Understand and acknowledge their feelings of fear, frustration, etc.

Dr. Colleen Norris, Edmonton

Perspectives from the Scientific Director of the Cardiovascular and Stroke Strategic Clinical Network with a Sex & Gender Lens.

- Sex refers to the biological construct, talking about male or female-anatomy and physiology, and the expression of genes and hormones. A person's sex does affect their healthcare treatment.
- Gender is a social construct. It is how you identify yourself based on a spectrum of feminine and masculine traits. It is linked to power, economic and social status—and it is culturally specific.
- Research shows that there are differences in the male and female immune systems and response.
 - Gender influences also affects the pattern of exposure—it determines where men and women are spending their time, the infections they contract, as well as the nature of exposure and its frequency.
- Women are balancing multiple responsibilities, and many do not have a safety net; and this can prove to be especially challenging during COVID-19. Low income women who work part-time are less likely to also have work benefits including sick leave.
- Recent studies are reporting more women are feeling negative mental health effects from worrying about COVID-19. Dr. Norris advises that women's stress management and self-care is more important than ever right now.
 - She recommends managing stress by maintaining healthy habits such as staying active, continuing hobbies, participating in spiritual activities, and keeping in contact with your social network via phone or video chat.
- The **signs of a heart attack in women include chest discomfort, headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, flu-like symptoms, increased sweating, and nausea**. If you or a loved one is experiencing any of these signs **call 9-1-1 immediately**. [click here](#)
 - Do not be afraid to come to the hospital in the event of a heart attack or stroke. If you are experiencing symptoms of heart attack or stroke, you absolutely need medical attention as soon as possible.

Dr. Thalia Field, Vancouver

Perspectives from a Stroke Neurologist at the Vancouver Stroke Program

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Dr. Field provided the following tips for women living with heart and stroke conditions during COVID-19:

- **An emergency is still an emergency.** Please **call 9-1-1** if you think you might be having a heart attack or stroke.
 - Rapid treatment reduces risk of death or disability.
 - Learn the [FAST signs of Stroke](#), and as Dr. Norris noted, the signs of a heart attack.
- Be familiar with your medical history, and medications. Keep this information in writing and have on hand.
- Ask your health care providers if you are you able to connect with them via virtual appointments, or are there online resources you can access during this time?
- Try to continue healthy behaviours: keep active, follow a smoking cessation program, try to eat healthier, and maintain a healthy weight. Is there peer support that can help you in these areas?
- Try to be prepared in knowing what is needed for your care, ask your health care professionals and **advocate for yourself**. Do not assume appointments will be automatically rescheduled.
 - Heart & Stroke has a resource called *Talking to your Doctor* which can [be found here](#), and can aid in knowing what questions to ask when meeting with your health care team.
 - Also, additional resources from the *Canadian Partnership for Stroke Recovery* can be [found here](#).

Please visit www.heartandstroke.ca for more information about heart conditions, stroke, vascular cognitive impairment and COVID-19.

COVID-19 makes our fight more urgent than ever. [Donate now to help those at greater risk.](#)