Women and heart attacks

A heart attack is a serious medical emergency in which the supply of blood to the heart is suddenly blocked, usually by a blood clot. A lack of blood to the heart may seriously damage the heart muscle and can be life threatening. Symptoms of heart attack include chest pain, shortness of breath, feeling weak or lightheaded and an overwhelming feeling of anxiety.

Most women don’t realise that heart disease can be a bigger risk than cancer because there is a notion that women do not get heart disease and that heart attacks happen to men.

On the contrary. An average of 98 women per day are admitted into hospital every year in the UK following a heart attack. According to the British Heart Foundation, heart disease is the single biggest killer of women all over the world. It kills more than twice as many women as breast cancer in the UK each year. Fortunately, this can be changed because 80 percent of heart diseases may be prevented with education and action.

As a woman gets older, their risk of developing heart disease increases. It is therefore important to be aware of the risk factors that can affect the possibility of developing a heart disease. The more risk factors, the higher the risk. Risk factors include smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, not doing enough physical activities and being overweight.

Identifying and managing the risk factors early on could help lower the risk of developing a heart attack in the future.

It is recommended all women over the age of 40 visit their local GP or nurse for a health check to check their risk of developing a heart disease. You can also request for an NHS health check if you are aged between 40 and 74 and live in England. Similar schemes are available in other parts of the UK.