A new campaign to raise awareness among women of their risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) begins this September led by the Irish Heart Foundation and supported by the HSE.

In 2008 nearly 5,000 Irish women died from CVD but unfortunately, as in other countries, most women remain unaware of their risk of this major killer. In fact research shows that Irish women deem breast cancer to be a bigger health risk – 60 per cent of those surveyed believe breast cancer is the biggest killer among women at 731 female deaths in 2008 compared to nearly seven times more deaths from heart disease and stroke in the same year.

Worryingly, only 18 per cent of women correctly identified heart disease as the main cause of female death. Another cause of concern is that 37 per cent of women also believed heart disease to be an exclusively ‘male disease’ even though just as many women die from it as men.

This September the Irish Heart Foundation aims to increase awareness of these issues using the international brand for heart disease and women – Go Red for Women. As the national charity fighting heart disease and stroke, our aim is to help women understand their risk of cardiovascular disease through a month-long awareness and educational campaign.
Red Alert – Key Messages

• Enjoy life. Take time out for yourself and keep in touch with friends
• Be active – at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity 5 times a week
• Eat more fruit and vegetables and less fat and fries. Eat more fresh food and less convenience foods
• If you smoke, try to stop
• Go easy on alcohol – no more than 14 standard drinks per week.
• Have regular blood pressure and cholesterol checks with your family doctor
• Know your family history and know the signs and symptoms of heart disease.

A sharp rise in the prevalence of CVD is expected across the population over the next 10 years and of particular concern is the level of major risk factors among women. At present 32 per cent of women are obese, 86 per cent have a cholesterol greater than or equal to 5 mmols and 53 per cent have a blood pressure greater than 140/90 mmHg. By 2020, heart disease is expected to rise by 50 per cent, stroke by 40 per cent, high blood pressure by 40 per cent, and diabetes (Type 1 and Type 2) by 62 per cent.

That is why the Irish Heart Foundation’s Go Red for Women campaign will focus on specific issues for women including recognition of signs and symptoms of heart attack and stroke, healthy lifestyle behaviours and appropriate management of high blood pressure and high cholesterol as well as the impact of menopause on women’s heart health. Our charity’s national Heart & Stroke Helpline 1890 432 787 will be on hand to answer queries and further information will be available on request or through our website www.irishheart.ie

In addition, there will be a FREE public lecture on women and CVD jointly organised by the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland and the Irish Heart Foundation on September 14th at 6.30pm. A webcast link will be available on the day and for viewing thereafter. The month long campaign will end with the Foundation’s World Heart Day Walks on Sunday September 26th, 2010 where everyone is invited to walk for 30 minutes or more to get their hearts pumping.

The Irish Heart Foundation Go Red For Women campaign will not be possible without the support of the public and many other groups. Many people do not realise but the Irish Heart Foundation is a national charity which relies on charitable donations for up to 90 per cent of its funding. We support, educate and train people to save lives, campaign for patients, promote positive health strategies, support research and provide vital public information. We rely on public support – through donations, as a volunteer or on our training courses. To get involved or make a donation see www.irishheart.ie

Promoting Irish Heart Month

The Irish Heart Foundation is asking you to support the campaign by promoting awareness among women of their risk of cardiovascular disease.

You can:

• Display Irish Heart Month promotional materials
• Circulate flyers and information on the campaign and your plans for promotion
• Promote lifestyle changes which can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, such as blood pressure and cholesterol awareness, getting more active, healthy eating
• Promote the public lecture in the Royal College of Physicians and organise and evening for different groups to tune into the webcast.

World Heart Day Annual Walk 2010

To mark the end of our heart month, we are also calling on women to Go Red for Women by organising a fundraising walk on September 26th. Get your heart pumping with a walk in your area or workplace and ask your family and friends to sponsor you. Every euro raised will help us keep more hearts beating. You can register with the Irish Heart Foundation by contacting Gráinne Kennedy on gkennedy@irishheart.ie

Irish Heart Month promotional materials

Materials will be available for your organisation to display. Our website www.irishheart.ie provides more details. Materials for display will include:

Magazine: attractive full colour 20-page consumer magazine with feature articles on signs and symptoms, diabetes, stroke, menopause, nutrition, cardiac rehab, lifestyle advice and treatment

Posters: promoting awareness (A3 size)

Leaflet: DL on women and heart disease

Other heart health leaflets: on blood pressure, salt, healthy eating, losing weight, cholesterol, physical activity

For more information on Irish Heart Month and the FREE public lecture contact Eimear Cotter on 01-6685001 or email heartmonth@irishheart.ie

References