



THE RED DRESS IS THE NATIONAL SYMBOL FOR WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE AWARENESS

THE HEART TRUTH CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

***The Heart Truth:* Heart Disease is the #1 Killer of Women**

The Heart Truth is that one in four American women dies of heart disease, and most fail to make the connection between risk factors—such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol—and their personal risk of developing heart disease.

***The Heart Truth Campaign:* Serious Messages about Women's Heart Health**

The Heart Truth is a national awareness campaign for women about heart disease sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Through the campaign, NHLBI leads the nation in a landmark heart health awareness movement that is being embraced by millions who share the common goal of better heart health for all women.

The Heart Truth campaign warns women about heart disease and provides tools to help them take action against its risk factors. It is primarily targeted to women ages 40 to 60, the time when a woman's risk of heart disease begins to increase. However, it's never too early—or too late—to take action to prevent and control risk factors since heart disease develops over time and can start at a young age—even in the teen years.

The campaign message is paired with an arresting visual—the Red Dress—designed to warn women that heart disease is their #1 killer. *The Heart Truth* created and introduced the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness in 2002 to deliver an urgent wake-up call to American women. The Red Dress reminds women of the need to protect their heart health, and inspires them to take action.

The Heart Truth partners include: The Office on Women's Health, DHHS; WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease; the American Heart Association; and other organizations committed to the health and well-being of women.

Campaign Background

The Heart Truth campaign began in response to recommendations of more than 70 experts in women's health who met in March 2001 to develop a national action plan to reduce the toll of heart disease on American women. The campaign was developed with input from partner organizations and focus groups with women conducted across the country. This research revealed that most women underestimate their personal risk and do not fully understand the devastating impact that heart disease has on one's life and family. The research strongly supported the urgent need to tell women about their risk of heart disease and how to lower it.

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What's a Red Dress Got to Do With It?

The Red Dress was designed to build awareness that women are at risk for heart disease, and motivate them to take action to reduce their risk. The creative concept of a Red Dress tested well with diverse women who cited its ability to get attention, convey the seriousness of heart disease, and change the perception that it is only a man's issue.

The symbol links a woman's focus on her "outer self" to the need to also focus on her "inner self," especially her heart health. The Red Dress serves as a red alert to convey the message that "Heart Disease Doesn't Care What You Wear—It's the #1 Killer of Women."

Seeking to advance the symbol, *The Heart Truth* forged a groundbreaking collaboration between the Federal government and the fashion industry, an industry intrinsically tied to female audiences. As a result of this partnership, fashion leaders—including top designers, models, and celebrities—have demonstrated their support for the issue of women and heart disease by participating in *The Heart Truth's* Red Dress Collections at New York's Fashion Week annually since 2003.

The Heart Truth launched the first Red Dress Collection at Fashion Week in February 2003, when 19 designers—from Vera Wang to Donna Karan to Oscar de la Renta—contributed red dresses for a stunning display under the Bryant Park tents. In February 2004, the fashion platform expanded with the creation of the first annual National Wear Red Day and the same-day debut of Red Dress Collection 2004—a fashion show featuring red dresses from the industry's elite designers worn by top fashion models and celebrities. The campaign returned to New York Fashion Week in 2005, 2006, 2007, and again in 2008 with celebrity-studded fashion shows. Some of the world's most recognized stars have walked the runway for *The Heart Truth* in new collections of designer red dresses including: Sheryl Crow, Kelly Ripa, Heidi Klum, Venus Williams, Angela Bassett, Rachael Ray, Christie Brinkley, Thalia, Vanessa Williams, Rita Moreno, Billie Jean King, Duchess of York Sarah Ferguson, Molly Sims, LeAnn Rimes, Ashanti, Christina Milian, Fergie, Eartha Kitt, and Liza Minnelli.

National Wear Red Day

The Heart Truth and many individuals and organizations celebrate National Wear Red Day on the first Friday of February each year. From a celebrity-studded Red Dress fashion show in New York City to local community events and awareness activities, thousands across the country wear red to unite in the national movement to give women a personal and urgent wake-up call about their risk for heart disease. Wear Red Day serves as a reminder to every woman to care for her heart, because heart disease is the #1 killer of women. On this day men and women can participate by wearing a red dress, shirt, tie, or the Red Dress Pin. The Red Dress Pin is available at www.hearttruth.gov.

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Campaign Ambassadors

The Heart Truth has been honored to have the support of former first lady Laura Bush, and six other first ladies, in sharing the message of better heart health for all women. Mrs. Laura Bush served as the national ambassador from 2003-2009 and *The Heart Truth* was part of her Women's Health and Wellness Initiative, leading the Federal government's effort to give women a personal and urgent wake-up call about their risk of heart disease.

As part of her ambassadorship, Mrs. Bush attended the launch of *The Heart Truth's* Red Dress Collection at Fashion Week in February 2003 and hosted an American Heart Month kick-off event at the White House in February 2004. She also attended *The Heart Truth's* Fashion Week events in New York in 2004, 2005, and 2007. At the Red Dress Collection 2008 Fashion Show, Mrs. Bush gave the opening remarks and joined the celebrity participants onstage at the close of the show. As Founding Ambassador, Mrs. Bush celebrates the contributions of leaders in the heart disease awareness movement. In 2007, she participated in two *Heart Truth* roundtables, and in February 2008, she saluted the fashion industry for their support in reaching women about heart disease at a reception at the White House.

The campaign looks forward to continued support from America's first ladies in fighting heart disease, the #1 killer of women through such programs as the First Ladies Red Dress Collection, now in its third showing at the National First Ladies Museum in Canton, Ohio, through May 31, 2009. *The Heart Truth's* First Ladies Red Dress Collection debuted in May 2005 in a special exhibit at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and was presented in 2007 at the Ronald Reagan Museum and Library in California. The Collection featured red dresses and suits worn by seven of America's First Ladies, including Laura Bush, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barbara Bush, Nancy Reagan, Rosalynn Carter, Betty Ford, and Claudia (Lady Bird) Johnson.

Campaign Resources and Activities

The campaign offers a wide variety of resources to help individuals and local communities spread *The Heart Truth*, including:

- Educational materials for women to learn about heart disease and how to reduce their risks
- The Red Dress Pin, the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness
- Speaker's Kit—a "talk-in-a-box"—and other promotional materials to facilitate spreading *The Heart Truth* message in local communities
- Online Toolkit containing activity ideas and materials to help individuals and organizations plan their own *Heart Truth* events throughout the year
- Online Activity Registry allowing organizations to share what they have done and learn about what other groups across the nation are doing to help spread *The Heart Truth*
- Compelling photos and stories of real women telling how heart disease changed their lives

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- National public service advertising (print, radio, and television)
- Partnerships with national non-profit organizations reinforced at the local level to extend the campaign's reach and message
- Partnerships with key women of color organizations, including the Association of Black Cardiologists, *Catalina* magazine, *Essence* magazine, League of United Latin American Citizens, The Links, Inc., National Black Nurses Association, and National Latina Health Network, as well as campaign materials tailored specifically to Latinas and African American women
- Corporate partnerships to expand the reach of *The Heart Truth* campaign's message, including collaborations with Diet Coke, Johnson & Johnson, General Mills, IMG Fashion, Celestial Seasonings, Time, Inc. Women's Group, and Swarovski
- Community programs, such as the Single City program, *The Heart Truth* Champions program, and *The Heart Truth* Road Show, that extend the reach of *The Heart Truth* messages into local communities

Making A Difference

The Heart Truth is making progress in the fight against heart disease in women. Heart disease deaths in American women continued to decline in 2006, and for the first time, have declined seven years consecutively, from 1999-2006. More women are aware that heart disease is the #1 killer of women—57 percent of women in 2006, up from 34 percent of women in 2000. The Red Dress has become one of the most recognizable health symbols in the United States—in 2008, more than half of women recognized the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease. More women are living longer, healthier lives, and fewer are dying of heart disease. But challenges remain, and many women still do not take heart disease seriously and personally. *The Heart Truth* campaign will continue to build awareness among women and motivate them to take action for heart health.

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For more information, or to access photography and other creative materials for *The Heart Truth* campaign, visit www.hearttruth.gov.

