Gender-specific aspects of coronary heart disease.

The total number of deaths from cardiovascular diseases (CVD) is greater for women than for men, although the mean age at manifestation of CVD is about 10 years older. However, the annual number of cases treated for CVD in acute hospital settings in men exceeds that of women by 50%. Remarkable gender differences exist in terms of morphological and physiological conditions (e.g. mean coronary vessel diameter; ability to adapt to protective exercise-induced myocardial hypertrophy), as well as of the frequency and clinical significance of somatic risk factors (e.g. smoking). Female body weight increases after menopause and the body shape assumes a more android fat distribution. Women report higher levels of unspecific and affective symptoms. They suffer more from anxiety and depression than men; however, the secondary impact on CVD onset may be less pronounced. The post-acute CVD course is more complicated in women, mainly because they are older and suffer more from multi-morbidity. Whilst male CVD patients aim for a rapid recovery, physical fitness and an increased life expectancy, female patients seek relief from everyday challenges, the maintenance of their independence and emotional support.