

# Media Release



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## **Busy Mums urged to take heart this Mother's Day**

Australian women are being urged to recognise the early warning signs for heart attack and have their risk factors checked regularly, in the same way they have regular breast checks and pap smears, as cardiovascular disease continues to be the biggest killer of Australian women.

On average, heart disease kills almost 30 Australian women each day or around 204 women each week. Putting this in perspective, Australian women are 4 times more likely to die of heart disease than breast cancer.\*

"It's fair to say that educating women about the warning signs of heart attack and getting regular blood pressure and cholesterol tests, is just as important as getting a regular mammogram or pap smear, particularly if you have a family history of heart disease," says A/Professor Diane Fatkin, Head of the Inherited Heart Disease program at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute.

"We need to change the perception that only old, overweight men die of heart attacks. The reality is, just as many women die of heart disease, and they are often tragically taken at the prime of their life, leaving behind husbands, children and families."

A/Professor Fatkin says women need to understand that they may not experience obvious or typical symptoms associated with a heart attack.

"The typical symptoms that most people associate with heart attack are feeling a tight band around the chest, crushing pressure or some may say like an 'elephant on the chest'.

"However women often present differently to men when it comes to heart attack. Many won't experience this crushing chest pain, and it's quite common for women to simply feel a little bit different, putting their symptoms down to bad indigestion, stress or anxiety," added A/Professor Fatkin.

This week, the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute remembers former colleague and finance manager Monica O'Loughlin, who tragically passed away on May 5 last year of a heart attack. A 51 year old mother of 5, Monica put down her symptoms to a bad bout of indigestion, and did not see anyone about her condition.

"Monica was slim, healthy and loved life. She was a typical Aussie Mum who juggled the many demands of kids, work and the home, but the last person she thought about was herself," added A/Professor Fatkin. "We want to honour her memory by urging other women to get to know those early warning signs, take heart and get checked out before it's too late."

In 2011, the Monica O'Loughlin "Take Heart" Public Lecture for Women will be inaugurated.

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**About the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute**

Established in 1994, the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute (VCCRI) is committed to excellence into heart disease and cardiovascular biology, cardiovascular research training and facilitating the rapid application of research discoveries to patient care. In Australia alone, heart muscle diseases - the cause of heart failure - are responsible for the death of over 130,000 people annually with 400 new cases being added each week. For more information visit [www.victorchang.edu.au](http://www.victorchang.edu.au)

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\* Australian Bureau of Statistics, causes of death Australia 2007, 3303.0. 10,610 Australian women died of heart disease and 2,680 women died of breast cancer in 2007.