

## Notable Women in Healthcare

As a healthcare company, we know that women have made monumental contributions to the field throughout the years. We would like to honor some true “Trail Blazers” and recognize the important role they played in the history of healthcare.

- **Elizabeth Blackwell, MD:** The first woman in the United States to earn a medical degree
- **Florence Nightingale:** A pioneer of modern nursing practices
- **Rebecca Lee Crumpler, MD:** The first black woman in the United States to earn a medical degree
- **Mary Edwards Walker, MD:** The only woman to receive the Presidential Medal of Honor and the first female U.S. Army surgeon
- **Jane Cooke Wright, MD:** The first woman to be elected president of the New York Cancer Society
- **Clara Barton:** Founder of the American Red Cross
- **Susan La Flesche Pitotte, MD:** The first Native American woman in the United States to earn a medical degree
- **Antonia Novello, MD:** The first woman and the first Hispanic to serve as surgeon general of the United States
- **Nancy W. Dickey, MD:** The first woman to be elected president of the American Medical Association (AMA)
- **Arvis Dee Hoven, MD:** While serving in her role as president of the American Medical Association, she became the first female chair of the World Medical Association

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## March is Women’s History Month

The month of March was chosen to recognize and celebrate the contributions women have made throughout history.

To fully appreciate Women’s History Month, we need to look all the way back to 1910. While attending the International Conference of Working Women in Copenhagen, Clara Zetkin, a women’s rights activist, came up with the idea of an international day for women. There were approximately 100 women from 17 countries in attendance – they all agreed unanimously. Therefore, the first International Women’s Day was celebrated in 1911 in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. In 1975, the day was finally, officially recognized by the United Nations.

In 1978, the Education Task Force of Sonoma County (California) Commission on the Status of Women, planned and executed a “Women’s History Week” celebration. The organizers of the event selected the week of March 8 to correspond with International Women’s Day. The movement spread, and communities across the country celebrated “Women’s History Week” the following year.

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the week of March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1980 as National Women’s History Week, citing in his proclamation that the “achievements, leadership, courage, strength and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well.” Presidents continued the annual proclamation until 1987, when Congress passed Public Law 100-9, designating March as “Women’s History Month.”

The theme of 2022 is, “Women Providing Health, Promoting Hope”. According to the National Women’s History Alliance, the theme is “both a tribute to the ceaseless works of caregivers and frontline workers during this ongoing pandemic and also a recognition of the thousands of ways that women of all cultures have provided both healing and hope throughout history.”



## Top Questions about Fitness and Women

Being physically active is one of the most important steps you can take to get and stay healthy. Women of all ages, shapes, and abilities benefit from getting active. Regular physical activity (exercise) can help lower your risk for many diseases that affect women, including heart disease and stroke. Exercise can also help relieve symptoms of some conditions, such as depression, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure. Women need to do different types of physical activities to reach or stay at a healthy weight and build strength and endurance.

### Q: How can physical activity help my health?

A: Getting regular physical activity is one of the best things you can do for your health. Regular physical activity can help:

- ✓ lower blood pressure and cholesterol
- ✓ improve depression
- ✓ improve sleep
- ✓ lower your risk of dying early

### Q: How much physical activity should I do?

A: Each week, women should get at least:

- 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity. **OR**
- 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity. **AND**
- Muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days

### Q: Can I exercise if I am underweight, overweight, or obese?

A: Maybe. People who are underweight due to an eating disorder should not exercise unless their doctor tells them to. Women who are overweight or obese should talk to their doctor or nurse about any concerns they have about beginning an exercise program. For most people, any amount or type of physical activity will help your overall health. Physical activity can also improve muscle strength, balance, and flexibility. Start slowly if you haven't been physically active before or if it has been a while.

### Q: Can exercise help menstrual cramps?

A: Maybe. Researchers have found that some women have fewer painful cramps during menstruation if they exercise regularly. There are almost no risks to regular physical activity, like walking, which may also help you feel better during your period.

### Q: Is it safe to exercise during pregnancy?

A: Physical activity during pregnancy is usually safe and healthy for you and your baby. And the more active you are during pregnancy, the easier it will be to start getting active after your baby is born. Talk to your doctor about your activity level throughout your pregnancy.

### Q: How can I avoid weight gain after menopause?

A: As you age, and especially in the years after menopause, you may find it harder to maintain your weight. You may need to increase the amount of physical activity you get and lower how many calories you eat to stay at the same weight.

### Q: How can physical activity help older women?

A: As you get older, regular physical activity helps:

- ✓ Keep bones strong
- ✓ Prevent hip fractures (breaking your hip)
- ✓ Decrease pain from arthritis
- ✓ Prevent dementia
- ✓ Maintain your independence

Balance exercises are important for all women, but especially older women who are at a higher risk of falls. Examples of these exercises include tai chi and standing from a sitting position.

[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)

## Women's Health Stress Relief and Relaxation

Stress is a fact of life. Although some stress is normal and even needed, too much of it can affect your quality of life and your health. There are simple things you can do to help relieve stress.

Tips to relieve stress:

- ✓ Take slow, deep breaths
- ✓ Soak in a warm bath
- ✓ Listen to soothing music
- ✓ Take a walk or do some other activity
- ✓ Meditate or pray
- ✓ Take a yoga class
- ✓ Have a massage or back rub
- ✓ Have a warm drink that doesn't have alcohol or caffeine

You can also make some changes in your everyday habits to reduce and relieve stress.

- ✓ Get plenty of sleep
- ✓ Stay connected to your family, friends, and other caring people in your life.
- ✓ Get regular exercise. It can help you clear your mind and work off feelings of frustration and anxiety.
- ✓ Don't drink or eat anything that has caffeine in it. Caffeine can make you feel "wound up" and more stressed.
- ✓ Don't smoke or use tobacco. Nicotine can make you feel more anxious.
- ✓ Don't drink alcohol. It can cause sleep problems and depression.

Your body may respond to stress by tensing up, which can cause pain. If you learn to relax your muscles, you can reduce muscle tension and anxiety. Progressive muscle relaxation can help you do this.

In progressive muscle relaxation you tense and then relax related groups of muscles. You can use a relaxation tape or CD to help you go through all the muscle groups. Or you can learn the muscle groups and work through them from memory.

Find a quiet place where you won't be bothered. Be sure you can lie on your back in comfort.

For each muscle group, breathe in and tense the muscle group for 4 to 10 seconds. Tense hard, but not to the point of cramping. Then breathe out while you suddenly and completely relax the muscle group. Don't relax it gradually. Rest for 10 to 20 seconds before repeating with the next muscle group.

[www.healthwise.org](http://www.healthwise.org)