



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***

Only 55 percent of women are aware that heart disease is the leading cause of death among women 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* is that one out of every three American women dies of heart disease.

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

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is sponsoring *The Heart Truth*, a national awareness campaign for women about heart disease, in partnership with the Office on Women's Health, DHHS; American Heart Association; WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease; and other organizations committed to the health and well-being of 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 the risk factors since heart disease develops over time and can start at a young age—even in the teen years. Its message is paired with an arresting visual—the Red Dress—as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness.

Since the campaign's launch in 2002, *The Heart Truth* and its partners have sparked a national movement to alert women about the dangers of heart disease. Community organizations, corporate businesses, local and national media, and women across the country have embraced the issue and rallied around the Red Dress symbol.

### **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 women's focus groups conducted across the country. These groups 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?**

As *The Heart Truth* campaign developed, the need for an attention-getting reminder to connect women with heart disease became clear. In February 2003, *The Heart Truth* launched the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness and debuted the Red Dress Collection at New York's Fashion Week, bringing the issue of women and heart disease to the national spotlight.

The Red Dress 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 works as a visual red alert to convey the message that "Heart Disease Doesn't Care What You Wear—It's the #1 Killer of Women."

### **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. On this day, Americans nationwide wear red to join the national movement to give women a personal and urgent wakeup call about their risk of heart disease. 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](http://www.hearttruth.gov).

On National Wear Red Day in February 2004, 2005, and 2006, the Red Dress symbol came to life at *The Heart Truth's* Red Dress Collection Fashion Shows at New York's Fashion Week. During the Red Dress Collection 2004 Fashion Show, top models walked the runway, showcasing red dresses from 26 of the most prestigious American fashion designers. *The Heart Truth* returned to center stage with the Red Dress Collection 2005 Fashion Show featuring 26 legendary celebrities modeling one-of-a-kind red gowns created by celebrated designers. On Friday, February 3, 2006, *The Heart Truth* once again spotlighted the Red Dress on the runway with preeminent designers and celebrity women in music uniting to present the fourth collection of red dresses created to raise awareness about women and heart disease.

### **First Lady Laura Bush: *The Heart Truth* Ambassador**

First Lady Laura Bush has participated in national and local events across the country as *The Heart Truth's* ambassador, speaking to women about her commitment to the issue of women and heart disease. Mrs. Bush hosted a program in February 2004 in the East Room of the White House where President Bush signed the Presidential Proclamation declaring February American Heart Month, and she announced the launch of the official Red Dress icon to serve both *The Heart Truth* campaign and its partners in advancing the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness.

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In May 2005, *The Heart Truth's* First Ladies Red Dress Collection debuted in a special exhibit at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. 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, including materials in Spanish
- 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
- 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 communities of color organizations, including the Association of Black Cardiologists, *Catalina* magazine, *Essence* magazine, The Links, Inc., the National Association of Latina Leaders, and the National Black Nurses Association, as well as campaign materials tailored specifically to Latinas and African American women
- Corporate partnerships to expand resources and enhance visibility of *The Heart Truth* campaign's message

In addition, the Red Dress Single City Program brings *The Heart Truth* directly to women in local communities nationwide. Local hospitals, community groups, and women's health organizations sponsor Red Dress-themed health fairs, health screenings, luncheons, fashion shows, and Red Dress gala events to extend the reach of *The Heart Truth* messages.

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For more information, visit [www.hearttruth.gov](http://www.hearttruth.gov). To access camera-ready artwork, as well as photography and other creative materials for *The Heart Truth* campaign, visit <ftp://hearttruth.ogilvypr.com>.

