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**General Health Status and Physical Functioning Predict Cardiovascular Disease  
Mortality in a Cohort of Postmenopausal Women:  
The Iowa Women's Health Study**

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**OBJECTIVE:** To examine the associations between self reported general health status and physical functioning and cardiovascular disease mortality in a cohort of older women.

**METHODS:** We studied 18,805 postmenopausal women who were free of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and other chronic diseases including cancer and Parkinson's disease in 1992 (age range: 58 - 76). General health status was assessed through mailed questionnaire by the question: "In general, would you say your current health is: excellent, good, fair, and poor." Physical functioning was assessed using a 5 item scale of functional health, from low (0) to high (5). During 10 years of follow-up there were 848 deaths due to cardiovascular disease (death certificate underlying cause: ICD 390-459, I00-I99).

**RESULTS:** As shown in the table, compared to women who reported "excellent" health, those who reported "fair" or "poor" health had 4.27-fold increased risk (95% 3.40-5.36) in cardiovascular disease mortality after adjusting for baseline age, education and self-reported high blood pressure and arthritis (Model 1). The association persisted after adjustment for body mass index, waist-hip ratio, estrogen use, cigarette smoking status and pack years, physical activity level, alcohol intake, dietary fat and cholesterol (Keys score), cereal fiber, and energy intake (RR 2.35, 95% CI 1.78-3.10). Adjustment for the physical function score, which had an inverse dose response association with CVD mortality, did not explain the findings for general health status and CVD mortality.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Self reported health status in older women without prevalent chronic disease predicts mortality due to cardiovascular disease.

**Table: Self-reported health status and cardiovascular disease mortality in 18,805 postmenopausal women, the Iowa Women's Health Study, 1992-2002.**

General Health Status	Model 1*		Model 2**	
	RR	95% CI	RR	95% CI
Excellent	1.00	REF	1.00	REF
Good	1.67	1.39-2.02	1.38	1.11-1.70
Fair or Poor	4.27	3.40-5.36	2.35	1.78-3.10
Physical Function Score				
0-1	1.00	REF	1.00	REF
2	0.70	0.51-0.97	0.81	0.57-1.16
3	0.40	0.30-0.54	0.59	0.42-0.83
4	0.30	0.22-0.40	0.48	0.33-0.69
5	0.19	0.22-0.25	0.36	0.26-0.52

\*General health and physical function modeled separately.

\*\*General health and physical function modeled mutually.