

# Women's Health Disparities: Osteoporosis and Bone Health

- ▶ Women account for **80%** of the estimated 10.2 million individuals over age 50 in the U.S. with osteoporosis.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ An estimated **2 million** individuals experience an osteoporosis-related fracture each year<sup>2</sup>; **71%** of these occur in women.<sup>3</sup>



**Osteoporosis is a medical condition in which bones, especially of the hip, spine, and wrists, lose density and thickness, becoming weak and more prone to fractures.**

Osteoporosis is more common among women, but many individuals do not know they have it until they break a bone. This “silent disease” affects 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men over age 50.<sup>4</sup> Further, the majority of these women do not undergo evaluation or treatment for osteoporosis for up to 12 months after a fracture.<sup>5</sup> Screening is important to help individuals take steps to treat and decrease the adverse effects of osteoporosis early.

## Common Symptoms

- ▶ Change in natural posture; curved spine
- ▶ Frequent fractures
- ▶ Height loss
- ▶ Persistent lower back pain

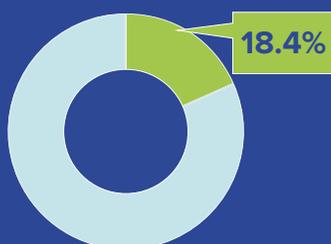
## Risk Factors

Age and sex are the primary risk factors for fractures and osteoporosis. Other factors that can increase the likelihood of developing osteoporosis include race, family history, lifestyle and dietary choices, body frame and size, and certain medical treatments that affect bone development. The most important risk factor for osteoporosis is low bone mass.

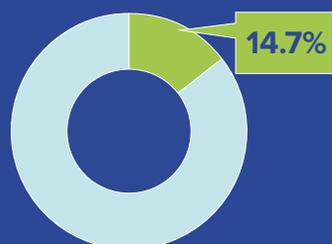
The risk of osteoporosis is also higher in people who have:

- ▶ Autoimmune diseases
- ▶ Blood disorders
- ▶ Endocrine disorders
- ▶ Gastrointestinal disorders
- ▶ Genetic disorders
- ▶ Hypogonadal disorders

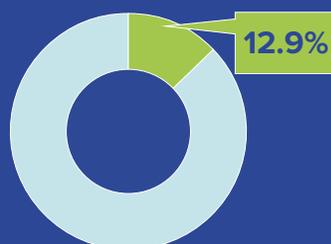
## Osteoporosis Prevalence among Adults Aged 50+<sup>6</sup>



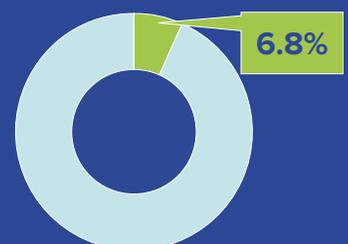
of Asian American adults



of Hispanic adults



of Non-Hispanic White  
adults



of African American  
adults

## Bone Health Disparities

While white women have the highest risk of fractures (89% of patients), racial disparities exist in osteoporosis screening, care, and outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Studies show that, as a whole, individuals from racial and ethnic minority groups receive referrals and screenings for bone health at much lower rates than their white counterparts. Moreover, Black and Hispanic women are 48% and 34% less likely than white women to have undergone bone testing prior to experiencing a fracture.<sup>7</sup> These disparities lead to lower rates of diagnosis and treatment and greater morbidity and mortality from osteoporosis and related fractures.<sup>8</sup> For example, African American patients are most likely to die after hip fractures, due to the increased hospital stay.<sup>4</sup>



## Consequences of Fractures

Approximately 2 million fractures, a common burden of osteoporosis, occur in the United States each year, requiring significant long-term and home health care.<sup>2</sup>

Up to 75% of patients who experience a fracture of the hip enter a nursing home for rehabilitation and/or long-term care.<sup>9</sup> Medical interventions, weight bearing exercises, and fall prevention strategies are typically recommended to improve the quality of care for older adults with osteoporosis.<sup>9</sup> Caregivers and in-home health professionals can also help patients with osteoporosis practice fall and fracture prevention, good nutrition, lifestyle modifications, and additional care following fractures and medical procedures.



## Economic Impact

Care costs for osteoporotic fractures among Medicare beneficiaries are estimated at \$57 billion, including direct medical costs and indirect societal costs related to productivity losses and informal caregiving.<sup>8</sup> By 2025, experts predict that osteoporosis will be responsible for more than 3 million fractures annually, resulting in \$25.3 billion in costs.<sup>2</sup>

## Women's Health Equity Initiative

The Society for Women's Health Research Women's Health Equity Initiative aims to raise awareness, educate the public and policymakers, and address longstanding disparities in women's health care access and outcomes. The initiative highlights statistics on disease states, life stages, and issues that disproportionately affect women in the United States and engages communities on solutions to improve health equity for women from diverse races, ethnicities, geographies, ages, and roles throughout society.

► For more resources about Bone Health and women, visit [www.swhr.org](http://www.swhr.org)



## REFERENCES

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