

# WHEN | Women's Healthcare Empowerment NOW!

- Men and women may produce different symptoms, different manifestations, and different treatment needs for the same diseases. This important new way of thinking is called gender-specific medicine.
- 21st century women's health focuses on the whole woman in the diverse contexts of her life and grounded in an interdisciplinary sex and gender-informed science. This includes mental and physical health and considers the effects of women's roles in society on their health.
- This new science can empower women to get the healthcare they really need—healthcare that takes their concerns and realities into consideration—healthcare that is tailored specifically to them.

**Here are some areas that demonstrate how women's bodies are unique.**

## Your Brain

- Women are nearly two times more likely than men to suffer from a major depressive disorder in their lifetime
- Because they typically live longer, women are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than men
- Women suffer from migraines approximately three times more often than men

## Your Heart

- In 2005, heart disease was the leading cause of death for women of all ages in the United States
- Approximately one third of women may develop cardiovascular disease

## Your Lungs

- Women smokers are more likely to suffer serious to fatal health consequences from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease than men who smoke
- Women report having a higher prevalence of asthma than men
- Women die of lung cancer in higher numbers than any other cancer

## Your Blood Sugar

- Nearly 26% of women with diabetes don't know they have the disease
- Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death for women in the United States
- Female diabetics are at greater risk of coronary heart disease death than male diabetics

## Your GI Tract

- Irritable bowel syndrome is more prevalent in women
- Women experience symptoms such as constipation, bloating, and abdominal pain more than men possibly because they empty both solids and liquids from their stomachs at a slower rate
- Women have a greater risk of gallstone disease compared to men

## Your Skeletal System

- Women are more likely to develop osteoporosis than men
- About one in two women over the age of fifty will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime
- Asian and Hispanic women are at highest risk for developing osteoporosis

The Institute of Medicine reported that gender is important in recognizing and treating illness.

**“Sex does matter. It matters in ways that we did not expect. Undoubtedly, it also matters in ways that we have not begun to imagine.”**

—Institute of Medicine 2001. *Exploring the Biological Contributions to Human Health. Does Sex Matter?*  
Mary-Lou Pardue, Ph.D.

Visit the following website for interactive information on this subject and to get tips for improving your health:

[www.WHENforWomen.com](http://www.WHENforWomen.com)

- ✦ More about women and gender-specific medicine
- ✦ Cardiovascular disease and your health
- ✦ Love your body, love yourself—with tips for stress management, nutrition, and exercise
- ✦ Guide to preparing for your next medical visit
- ✦ Resource list with links to websites, books, and articles



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## Your Skeletal System

You have 206 bones in your body that protect your organs and allow you to stand and move. Your bones are living tissue which grow and change. Your body is building and storing bone tissue, and increasing bone mass until you are near age 30. When peak bone mass is reached, your bones are at their strongest. With age, your bone mass begins to break down faster than new bone mass can be made. As a result, the bones may become weaker. In women, once menopause is reached, bone loss accelerates.

## Osteoporosis

Many people think of osteoporosis as a disease that frail elderly women develop. While it is a disease that typically occurs in post-menopausal women, your risk for osteoporosis may depend on peak bone mass developed earlier in life. Osteoporosis is a disease where the bones gradually lose excessive amounts of their store of calcium and other minerals, making them more susceptible to fracture and other trauma, especially in the hip, wrist, and spine.

- Sometimes osteoporosis is called a "silent disease" because bone mass is depleted without symptoms.
- In the United States, almost 30 million of the approximately 44 million people who have osteoporosis or low bone mass are women.

## Strong Bone Solutions

- Women age 19-50 should get at least 1,000 mg of calcium in their diet per day. Women over age 50 need 1,200 mg of calcium every day. Foods high in calcium include dairy foods, salmon, dark green leafy vegetables, and calcium-fortified foods like orange juice, cereals, and breads. Consulting a reliable food chart will help you to find out the calcium content of specific foods.
- Adults age 50 and under should get 400-800 International Units (IU) of vitamin D daily, and adults age 50 and over should get 800-1,000 IU of vitamin D daily.
- Participate in weight-bearing exercises such as weight training, walking, stair-climbing, dancing, playing tennis, and bicycling on most days of the week for thirty minutes or more. These exercises can help keep bones strong and healthy.
- Stop smoking and limit your alcohol intake. Tobacco use and excessive alcohol use are indicated as risk factors for osteoporosis.
- There are medications available to help fight osteoporosis.