



African-American Women and Osteoporosis

While African-American women tend to have higher bone mineral density (BMD) than white women throughout life, they are still at significant risk of developing osteoporosis. Furthermore, as African-American women age, their risk of developing osteoporosis more closely resembles the risk among white women. So, as the number of older African-American women in the United States increases, there will be an increasing number of African-American women with osteoporosis.

Recent scientific studies highlight the risk that African-American women face with regard to developing osteoporosis and fracture.

- Approximately 300,000 African-American women currently have osteoporosis.
- Between 80-95% of fractures in African-American women over 64 are due to osteoporosis.
- African-American women are more likely than white women to die following a hip fracture.
- As African-American women age, their risk for hip fracture doubles approximately every seven years.
- Diseases more prevalent in the African-American population, such as sickle-cell anemia and systemic lupus erythematosus, are linked to osteoporosis.

How does nutrition affect African-Americans and their risk of osteoporosis? Adequate intake of calcium plays a crucial role in building peak bone mass and preventing bone loss. Studies indicate that African-American women consume 50 percent less calcium than the Recommended Dietary Allowance.

Lactose intolerance can also hinder optimal calcium intake. As many as 75 percent of all African-Americans are lactose intolerant. However, a recent study found that many people who are lactose intolerant can actually digest as much as two cups of milk per day, if divided into small servings, without symptoms. Although milk and other dairy products such as cheese and yogurt are the best calcium sources, there are many non-dairy foods that also contain calcium. Turnip greens, mustard greens, and kale are good sources of calcium among green vegetables: however large quantities must be consumed to equal the amount of calcium supplied by dairy products. Sardines and salmon with edible bones and calcium-fortified orange juice are also good sources of calcium.