

Osteoporosis

What debilitating, but preventable and treatable illness are a 25 year-old asthma patient, a healthy 55 year-old woman, an 85 year-old man, and a 30 year-old female marathon runner all at risk for?

Osteoporosis, or porous bone, is a disease that gradually weakens bones and often leads to painful and debilitating fractures. The Surgeon General recently released a report stating that by 2020, one in two Americans over age 50 will be at risk for fractures from osteoporosis or low bone mass.

Risk factors for osteoporosis include: family history of osteoporosis, being thin, menopause, especially early or surgically induced, low intake of calcium and/or vitamin D, use of certain medications including corticosteroids or anticonvulsants, an inactive lifestyle, amenorrhea, use of alcohol or cigarettes, being of Asian decent, anorexia, and the presence of certain other chronic medical conditions. Midwives may care for clients who are at risk and can help educate women about this potentially disabling illness. Prevention and early diagnosis and treatment can have a significant impact on all women's long-term well being and help them to have healthy, active and pain-free lives.

While women are four times more likely than men to develop this disease, men also suffer from osteoporosis. Contrary to popular belief, *osteoporosis is not a disease of old people*, and if preventative steps are not taken, bone loss may occur earlier in life, long before symptoms of the disease. Osteoporosis and low bone mass are currently estimated to be a major public health threat for almost 44 million US women and men aged 50 and older. By the year 2010, it is estimated that over 52 million women and men in this same age category will be affected and, if current trends continue, the figure will climb to over *61 million by 2020*.

Public policy issues arise around access to necessary testing and diagnosis of osteoporosis, as with other chronic illnesses. However, the costs for testing, diagnosis and treatment are low compared to care for long-term disability later in life.

The following resources will assist midwives and clients in learning about osteoporosis:

- On October 14, 2004, the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Surgeon General's Office** released *The 2004 Surgeon General's Report on Bone Health and Osteoporosis*. The report includes information on the people most affected by osteoporosis and low bone mass, the impact of untreated bone disease, suggestions for improving bone health and the potential risk for millions of Americans if preventive action is not taken. You can download the Surgeon General's Report and a guide to improving bone health, "The 2004 Surgeon General's Report on Bone Health and Osteoporosis: What it Means to You," at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/bonehealth/>, or request a copy by calling (866) 718-BONE (2663).
- **National Institutes of Health, Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases- National Resource Center (NIH-ORBD NRC)** <http://www.osteoporosis.gov/> The National Resource Center is dedicated to increasing the awareness, knowledge and understanding of

health professionals, clients, underserved and at-risk populations (such as Hispanic and Asian women, adolescents, and men) and the general public about the prevention, early detection and treatment of osteoporosis and related bone diseases.

- **The US Department of Health and Human Services’ Office on Women’s Health, National Women’s Health Information Center.** This website and call center were created to provide free, reliable health information for women. Providers and clients can browse the database for resources or look through the Special Sections on topics of interest. Visit their website, <http://www.4woman.gov>, or call toll-free at 1-800-994-WOMAN. The section for providers is found at: <http://www.4woman.gov/healthpro/>.
- **The National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF)** is the organization which supports research, advocacy and education about this disease. Their web site contains up-to-date, in-depth information for both providers and clients.
 - **The NOF home page is:** <http://nof.org/> Information is available for health care professionals at: <http://www.nof.org/professionals/index.htm>
 - **Prevention information** is found at: <http://www.nof.org/prevention/index.htm>
 - **NOF has a Professional Partner’s Network**, which is a resource to assist providers helping clients with issues related to osteoporosis and bone health. <http://www.nof.org/professionals/ppn/index.htm>
 - **Materials for providers** available through the NOF Web site include: *The Pocket Guide to Prevention and Treatment of Osteoporosis* and the *Health Professionals Guide to Rehabilitation of the Patient with Osteoporosis*. Midwives may order single copies of these materials for free.
 - **Clinical practice guideline:** http://www.nof.org/professionals/cliniciansguide_form.asp. Single copies of this document, titled “Physicians Guide to Prevention and Treatment of Osteoporosis,” are available free of charge.
 - **Fast facts** on osteoporosis: <http://www.nof.org/osteoporosis/diseasefacts.htm>
 - **Reimbursement** and coding tips: http://www.nof.org/professionals/reimbursement/index.htm#ICD-9_Codes

The ACNM “*QuickInfo*” series was developed by the Department of Professional Services to respond to common inquiries, summarizing ACNM resources regarding a particular topic, as well as listing selected literature and a variety of other resources. Your feedback is welcomed; contact Professional Services at 240-485-1800 or info@acnm.org.
11/04

Revised 12/05/05; 6/30/08