



Data Points

CWHS

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Pain is a common problem affecting 34 million Americans and is the cause of 25% of all sick days. Whether pain is acute (severe and lasts a short time) or chronic (recurs or lasts over a long period of time and reduces the ability to function), it can control a large part of a woman's life. Pain is frequently due to chronic health problems such as arthritis, shingles, or fibromyalgia. However, pain for many women often has no identifiable cause or diagnosis. Unrelieved or under-treated pain can lead to increased stress, delayed healing, impaired immune system functioning, decreased mobility, depression, and problems with appetite and sleep. Women can help to control their pain, with medication, exercise, weight control, stretching, acupuncture, and support groups.

The 1999 California Women's Health Survey asked 4,163 women, "During the past 12 months, has pain often kept you from doing things you wanted to do?" Other questions asked about race, activity limitations, and reasons for limitation in activity.

Results: Overall, 24% of all women reported that pain has often kept them from doing what they wanted to do. The percent of women reporting pain increased

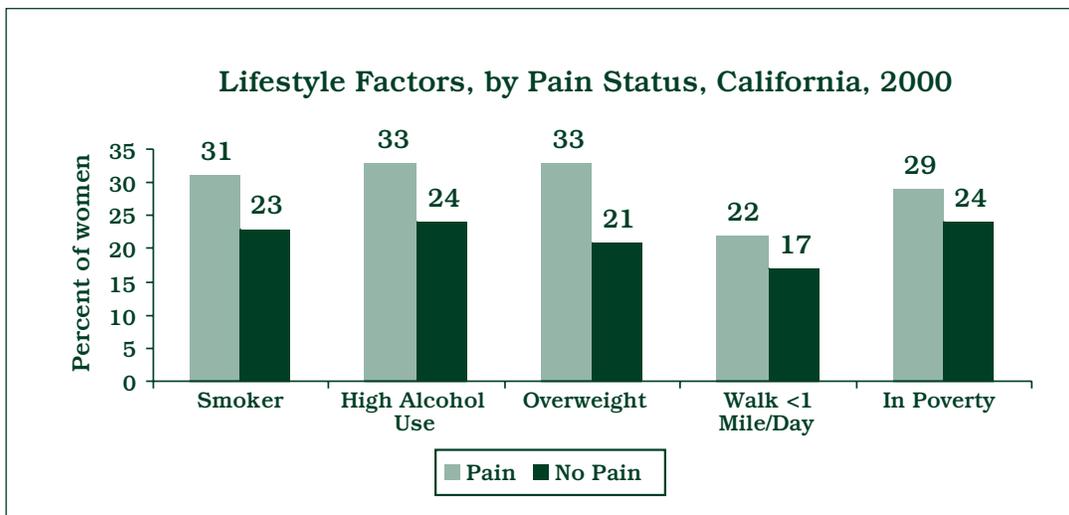
with age: 21% (ages 18-44), 28% (ages 45-64), and 31% (ages 65+).

- Black women were most likely to report pain (30%), followed by White (25%), Hispanic (21%), and Asian (20%) women.
- Among women who reported pain, 75% also reported some type of limitation in specific activities. Older and middle-aged women were more likely to report activity limitation than younger women (87% versus 63%). Black and Hispanic women (80%) were more likely to report activity limitation than Asian (64%) or White (74%) women.
- Among women who reported pain and activity limitation, the health problems that contributed most to the limitations were back or neck problems (24%), arthritis or rheumatism (14%), broken bone or joint problem (7%), recent accident or injury (5%), lung or breathing problems (5%), or recent surgery (4%).
- Women who reported pain were more likely than women without pain to be smokers, use alcohol heavily, be overweight, walk less than one mile/day, and be in poverty (please see graph).

PAIN AND ACTIVITY LIMITATION, CALIFORNIA, 1999

CMRI (California Medical Review, Inc.)

Public Health Message: The majority of California women surveyed are not limited by pain. However, chronic pain affects nearly a quarter of women surveyed, limiting their activities and decreasing their quality of life. Pain status is related to other factors, such as smoking and alcohol use, which affect overall health status.



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