



# Data Points

CWHS

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

**O**steoporosis is a disease in which bones become very porous and thin. Low bone mass places women at risk for osteoporosis, and both osteoporosis and low bone mass place women at risk for bone fractures. About 80% of all osteoporosis cases occur among women.<sup>1</sup> Older women and women who have gone through menopause are at higher risk. Other risk factors for osteoporosis include older age, family history, smoking, having a small frame, excessive alcohol use, being underweight, eating a low calcium diet, and having an inactive lifestyle. Bone density testing, a procedure that measures bone mass, is used to diagnose osteoporosis and is recommended for women at risk for the disease.<sup>2</sup>

The 1999 California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) asked 1,642 women ages 50 and older or who had had a hysterectomy, **"In the past 2 years, have you had a bone density test for osteoporosis or bone loss?"** Other questions asked about menopausal estrogen use, smoking, alcohol use, weight, and walking.

Results: Overall, 21% of women reported having a bone density test in the past 2 years. About 14% of Black, Hispanic, and Asian women reported having the

test, while 23% of White women reported being tested.

- Risk factors for osteoporosis also varied by race/ethnicity. Hispanic (39%) and Black (43%) women were less likely than Asian (55%) and White (66%) women to have ever used estrogen. Asian (23%) and White (14%) women were more likely to be underweight than Black and Hispanic women (5%).
- More Black (27%) and White (17%) women were smokers than Hispanic (9%) or Asian (2%) women. Fewer Asian women (15%) walked a mile or more per day than Black (26%) and Hispanic and White women (31%). High alcohol use was very low for all women (1%).
- Underweight women were more likely than other women to have had a recent bone density test. However, women with other modifiable risk factors for osteoporosis were less likely to have been screened for osteoporosis in the past two years than women without these risk factors (see graph).

## OSTEOPOROSIS RISK FACTORS AND BONE DENSITY TESTING, CALIFORNIA, 1999

CMRI (California Medical Review, Inc.)

**Public Health Message:** Osteoporosis, which places women at higher risk for bone fractures, can be diagnosed with a bone density test. Women with modifiable risk factors are less likely to have had a bone density test than other women who do not have these risk factors.

<sup>1</sup> NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases: [www.osteoo.org/osteo.html](http://www.osteoo.org/osteo.html)  
<sup>2</sup> National Osteoporosis Foundation: [www.nof.org/osteoporosis/stats.htm](http://www.nof.org/osteoporosis/stats.htm)

