

AVOIDING OSTEOMALACIA:
IS IT A WOMAN PROBLEM?

Syrina Jeter-McCray
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Today's women face many obstacles that can derail career, personal and family goals. Health issues play an important role in how and when those goals are attained. There are many diseases and/or conditions that attack primarily women. Is osteomalacia one of those conditions? In this paper we will discuss that question and how women can avoid this condition.

According to MayoClinic.com, osteomalacia is defined as a softening or weakening of bone caused by demineralization and depletion of calcium from the bone. Osteomalacia can be caused by Vitamin D deficiency, poor dietary intake, or poor absorption of calcium and other minerals needed to produce and harden bone. Because of poor absorption, osteomalacia is often developed during the bone building process. Osteomalacia can also develop from other conditions such as certain surgeries, kidney or liver disease and from certain drugs (Patient UK, 2009).

Based on how osteomalacia is developed, can this disease be labeled as a women's disease? Osteomalacia is often misdiagnosed or not diagnosed at all, therefore minimizing the amount of men affected on record. In the United Kingdom, one in seven adults is affected by this condition. In Asia there are as many as nine out of ten adults affected. Of this number there is a generous mix of male and female patients experiencing this disease (Patient UK, 2009).

There is a wide group of people who are at risk for osteomalacia. This group involves women who are pregnant or are breastfeeding. Osteomalacia occurs because the majority of vitamin d absorbed by the mother is transferred to the baby (Patient UK, 2009). Others at risk include those who get very little sunlight, have dark skin (less sun gets through dark skin), those who have a family history of vitamin d deficiency, people

who are on a vegetarian or vegan diet, people over 65 who may not absorb sunlight as well due to older skin and people who have diseases that affects the way the body absorbs vitamin d, such as Cohn's Disease (Patient UK, 2009).

As shown in the information stated above, osteomalacia can affect many different people who are predisposed by genetics or those who have habits that are not conducive to vitamin d absorption. All these people are not necessarily women. Osteomalacia is not a disease that targets only women, but one that targets individuals who are deficient in the needed vitamins and minerals.

Because women are more likely than not to seek medical attention when in pain, may explain the appearance of this being a disease affecting only women. Women can avoid this disease by spending a generous amount of time in the sun shine or by taking supplements that replace the vitamins and minerals lost due to pregnancy and breastfeeding mothers.

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