

Women with Disabilities

Health and Wellness Fact Sheet

for Health Care Providers

Women with disabilities are **women** first! They have all the same health concerns as other women but may be at additional risk for some conditions. Simply put, a “disability” is a limitation of functional ability, not a disease.

Women with Disabilities

- Represent 8 % (28 million people) of the total US population.
- Live in rural areas- 26%.
- Are often poor and have lower levels of education than other women.
- Frequently encounter barriers in receiving general and reproductive health care.
- Are more likely to be overweight or underweight.
- Face disproportionate health risks when compared to women without disabilities.
- Represent 58% of women age 65 and over.

National Women’s Health Information Center and Univ. of Montana Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities

Disproportionate Health Risks

- Depression
- Stress/Anxiety
- Kidney disease
- Lung disease
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Urinary tract infections
- Seizure disorders

Contributing factors:

- ✓ Effects of lack of exercise, including osteoporosis
- ✓ Lack of accessible and educated fitness facilities
- ✓ Poor nutrition that may be a result of severe functional limitations (Microwave cooking and fast food may be easier and/or more accessible.)
- ✓ Tobacco use

Center for Research on Women with Disabilities and 2001 BRFSS, NCCDPHP, CDC - 50 states, DC & PR

Abuse and Women with Disabilities

62% of women with disabilities experience emotional, physical or sexual abuse at some time; that is the same rate as **all** women; however,

- Women with disabilities reported longer durations of abuse than women without disabilities (3.9 versus 2.5 years) and more difficulty getting out of the abusive situation.
- Women with disabilities are more likely to experience emotional abuse by attendants, strangers, or health care providers.
- Disability-related abuse includes withholding transportation, medication, adaptive equipment, necessary personal care.
- Programs serving abused women frequently are inaccessible, lack interpreter services for the deaf and cannot accommodate women who need assistance with daily care or medications.

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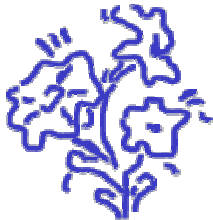
This highlights the needs for victim advocates to know about disability; and for women with disabilities to know about victim services.

Health Care Costs and Utilization of women with disabilities are 4 times that of women without disabilities.

Contributing factors:

- Barriers to health care, including
 - ✓ Inadequate access to facilities,
 - ✓ Lack of personal assistance during appointment,
 - ✓ Insufficient interpreter services for deaf and/or hard of hearing women,
 - ✓ Inaccessible screening equipment.Many health care facilities do not have accessible exam tables and/or mammography equipment.
- Higher incidence of use of emergency departments and public health clinics,
- Policies of some third party payors that may not permit continuing therapies to enable women to manage their chronic health conditions well.

National Women's Health Information Center and
Center for Research on Women with Disabilities



Physicians need to know

- 39% of women with disabilities report their physicians do not speak directly to them if family or friends are present.
- 31% have had a physician refuse to see them due to disability.
- 36% had difficulty finding a physician able or willing to manage their pregnancies.
- 56% reported hospitals could not accommodate their disability-related needs when they gave birth.
- 24% also use alternative health care providers.

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According to Title III of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990...

Public accommodations (e.g., physicians' offices) must eliminate unnecessary eligibility standards or rules that deny individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to enjoy the goods and services of a place of public accommodation and must maintain accessible features of facilities and equipment.

42 USC 12182

Resources

- ✓ **Health Promotion for Women with Disabilities** Web Site
<http://www.nursing.villanova.edu/womenwithdisabilities/welcome.htm>
- ✓ The **National Women's Health Information Center** www4women.gov
- ✓ The **National Domestic Violence Hotline**, 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY), keeps a database of shelters nationwide that are accessible or have interpreters. www.ndvh.org
- ✓ The **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence** has issued a manual of guidelines on making shelters accessible and educating staff on disability issues. <http://www.ncadv.org/>
- ✓ Baylor College of Medicine's **Center for Research on Women with Disabilities**
www.bcm.tmc.edu/crowd/
- ✓ The **New Mexico Office of Disability and Health's** Resources page
<http://www.health.state.nm.us/dhp/dhpresources.htm>

