



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Your Gender May Impact How You Cope With Pain

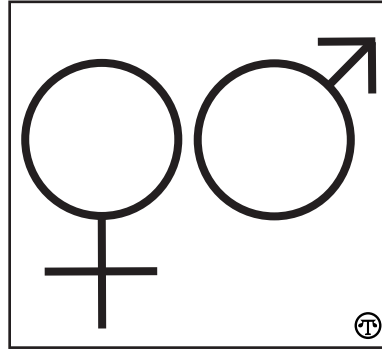
(NAPS)—Men and women's lives are affected by the type of pain they experience, their pre-conceptions about pain and the way they respond to that pain.

Diseases are the number one cause of pain for women, while accidents are the number one cause of pain for men, according to the "Gender Attitudes Toward Chronic Pain" survey commissioned by Partners Against Pain® and the National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC). In addition, women are biologically more sensitive to pain than men and are more likely than men to experience severe pain, on a more frequent basis.

Women are better at discussing and coping with pain than men; this behavior is reinforced by cultural expectations of roles and socialization. The survey found that women are more likely to discuss their pain than men (84 percent compared to 73 percent). Overall, men are as likely as women to turn to their significant other to discuss their pain, while women may turn to their friends more frequently than men. In fact, 30 percent of men would be willing to give up all contact with their friends for one year if they could live pain-free.

"Studies indicate that because women are more likely to discuss their pain, they've developed better coping mechanisms to deal with pain, such as actively seeking support and treatment. Men, on the other hand, tend to 'grin and bear it' and delay seeking treatment, resorting to proactive pain-relieving activities only when the pain is so severe that it interferes with their livelihood," explains Amy R. Niles, Executive Director, NWHRC.

While women appear to be better communicators than men and seek treatment for their pain more often than men, they are less likely to be taken seriously by a health care professional and to have their pain appropriately treated. In fact, women often receive less aggressive



**Though women experience severe pain more frequently than men do, their pain is often taken less seriously.**

treatment for their pain than men.

Regardless of gender, pain left untreated or inadequately treated can have an impact on everyday life. Fortunately, there are many things people can do to alleviate their pain. Treatment may incorporate an interdisciplinary approach that includes exercise, relaxation therapy, and medication. For mild or low-level pain, acetaminophen and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as aspirin or ibuprofen, may be recommended. For moderate to severe pain, patients may require a prescription pain medication that can include opioid analgesics, along with NSAIDs, Cox-2 inhibitors, or low-dose anti-depressants.

Learning more about the ways men and women experience pain may help health care professionals and patients learn how to manage pain more effectively. Partners Against Pain is a resource created to educate about appropriate pain management. For additional information about pain management, consult your doctor or pain specialist. You can also get free information about pain management from Partners Against Pain at [www.partnersagainstpain.com](http://www.partnersagainstpain.com) or by writing to Partners Against Pain, 1 Stamford Forum, Department M, Stamford, CT 06901-3431.