

# WOMEN AND MEN: 10 DIFFERENCES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

When it comes to health, there are many crucial health differences between men and women. Yet many women do not know that they react differently to some medications, are more vulnerable to some diseases, and may have different symptoms. The Society for Women's Health Research brought attention to sex differences in initiating the groundbreaking 2001 Institute of Medicine report, *Exploring the Biological Contribution to Human Health: Does Sex Matter?* The report underscored the need to better understand the importance of sex differences and translate that knowledge into improved medical practice and therapies.

Following are some quick but vital facts about sex differences in health care that you probably did not know.

**Heart Disease** – Heart disease kills 500,000 American women each year – over 50,000 more women than men – and strikes women, on average, 10 years later than men. Women are more likely than men to have a second heart attack within a year of the first one.

**Depression** – Women are two-to-three times more likely than men to suffer from depression in part because women's brains make less of the hormone serotonin.

**Osteoporosis** – Women comprise 80 percent of the population suffering from osteoporosis, which is attributable to a higher rate of lost bone mass.

**Smoking** – Smoking has a more negative effect on cardiovascular health in women than men. Women are also less successful quitting smoking and have more severe withdrawal symptoms.

**STDs** – Women are two times more likely than men to contract a sexually transmitted disease, and more likely to experience significant drops in body weight, which can lead to wasting syndrome.

**Anesthesia** – Women tend to wake up from anesthesia more quickly than men – an average of seven minutes for women and 11 minutes for men.

**Drug reactions** – Even common drugs like antihistamines and antibiotic drugs can cause different reactions and side effects in women and men.

**Autoimmune Disease** – Three out of four people suffering from autoimmune diseases, such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, and lupus, are women.

**Alcohol** – Women produce less of the gastric enzyme that breaks down ethanol in the stomach. Therefore, after consuming the same amount of alcohol, women have higher blood alcohol content than men, even allowing for size differences.

**Pain** – Some pain medications (known as kappa-opiates) are far more effective in relieving pain in women than in men.