

EXPANDING OUTREACH FOR OSTEOPOROSIS PREVENTION

Partnerships improve access to education and screening for women and girls

Public Health Problem

- Osteoporosis is a disease which makes bones fragile. Many women don't know they have it until they fall and break a bone.
- Getting adequate calcium and Vitamin D and engaging in weight-bearing physical activity is important for preventing osteoporosis, as well as for general good health.
- Educating girls about osteoporosis provides an opportunity for lifestyle changes while they are still building bone mass.
- Screening women can identify those with low bone mass and alert them to see a health care provider if necessary; educating women can guide them to make changes to prevent bone loss.

Program

- The Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health, educates women and girls about osteoporosis through its Women's Health Initiative grant-funded partners.
- The *Building Better Bones* program has provided education and screenings to more than 28,000 women throughout the state.
- More recently, the office added the *Jump Girl Jump* and *Osteoporosis Prevention for Teens* programs to its grant-funded offerings, reaching an additional 2,000 participants with this education. These programs promote bone-strengthening activities and the importance of eating bone-building foods.
- All three programs promote the adoption of healthier habits such as increased physical activity and healthier food choices.

Impact

- Hard-to-reach rural girls and women in Illinois now have better access to osteoporosis prevention programs.
- Women have better access to free bone mineral density screenings.
- Evaluation of recent programs shows that forty to sixty-five percent of participants in all programs report increased knowledge about osteoporosis.
- Almost all participants in the *Building Better Bones* program report making a lifestyle change following the program.
- Of the almost three thousand women screened in one year, forty percent were referred to a health care provider for follow-up. Most of these women were unaware of their personal risk for osteoporosis before the screening test.

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