- Women—diseases

Why do more women get these four diseases?

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WOMEN are more prone than men to several health conditions due to differences in anatomy, hormones, family history, and lifestyle. Beyond gynecological concerns, hormonal changes, particularly after menopause, also increase the risk of diseases such as heart attack and stroke.



Sheryll Cornejo, MD, an internal medicine consultant at Makati Medical Center (MakatiMed), highlights four other conditions that affect women more often and shares ways to reduce the risks.

Osteoporosis, or weakened bones, is linked to declining estrogen levels after menopause. Women also naturally have smaller, thinner bones, making fractures more likely.

Build bone strength by eating calciumrich foods like dairy, leafy greens, and fish with edible bones, getting enough vitamin D through early morning sunlight, doing weightbearing and strength-training exercises, and avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol.

Thyroid cancer is more common in women of reproductive age. Estrogen receptors in thyroid tissue may help explain the higher incidence, while family history, radiation exposure, obesity, and iodine deficiency also increase risk.

“While you cannot completely prevent sporadic thyroid cancer, maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, limiting radiation exposure, and knowing your family history can lower your risk,” says Dr. Cornejo. Regular neck self-examinations can also help detect it early.

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic autoimmune disease affecting the joints, is two to three times more common in women. Stronger immune responses, hormone fluctuations, genetics, smoking, obesity, and environmental factors all play a role.

A healthy diet, regular exercise, maintaining an ideal weight, quitting smoking, and managing stress can help reduce flare-ups and lower overall risk.

Alzheimer’s disease is diagnosed more often in women, partly because they tend to live longer. High blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, heavy alcohol use, inactivity, and social isolation are also linked to the disease.

“Modifying these risk factors can delay, if not prevent, Alzheimer’s disease,” says Dr. Cornejo. “Staying physically, mentally, and socially active helps keep the brain healthy.”