

# ASIAN INDIAN

## Women's Health

### HISTORY

India is considered the largest country in South Asia and lies between Pakistan, China, and Nepal. India is a very diverse country consisting of 1,087 million people who speak more than 200 dialects<sup>i</sup>. The national language of India is Hindi and a greater part of the population is Hindu.

**In 2050, India is anticipated to be the largest country in the world with an estimated population of 1,628 million.**

Asian Indians are considered one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in America, yet in the early 1800s this was not so. The first Indian immigrated into the United States as a maritime worker in 1790. Further immigrants traveled into the country as agricultural workers in the 1920s. In 1946, the Indian Citizenship Bill was passed which allowed immigrant Indians to naturalize. This bill also increased the immigration of Indian professionals into the United States, yet at the same time set a quota for the number that could enter. In 1965, an immigration act was passed which eliminated the quota, thereby increasing the number entering the United States. Currently, the Asian Indian American population is considered the third largest Asian American ethnic group within the United States<sup>ii</sup>.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

The U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 reports 11,898,828 Asian Indians reside in the United States<sup>1iii</sup>.

- **47%** of the Asian Indian population are females<sup>iv</sup>
- **10%** of the Asian Indian population lives below the poverty level<sup>v</sup>

### HEALTH STATUS

Health data among Asian Indians or any South Asian ethnicity can be very difficult to find, South Asians tend to be generalized into one category therefore limiting the data on individual ethnicities and blending diverse geographical and cultural origins into one. In addition, small sample sizes tend to be used in research done on South Asians creating an inability to generalize the data among different areas. It is also difficult to find health data which differentiates Asian Indians from Asian Indian Americans; the lack of differentiation can

overshadow certain important risk factors such as immigration and acculturation.

### CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE

Asian Indians are at a higher risk of getting coronary artery disease (CAD) than many other ethnicities<sup>2vi</sup>.

This disease is even more concerning towards Asian

**Asian Indians have a:**

- **3-4 times higher risk of CAD than White Americans**
- **6 times higher risk of CAD than Chinese**
- **20 times higher risk of CAD than Japanese<sup>2</sup>**

Indian women because Asian Indian women have a prevalence of CAD which is three times higher than all women in the United States<sup>vii</sup>. A study done by Dhawan et al. on Asian Indians in Britain found that the lack of physical activity could be a risk factor for coronary artery disease

among the Asian Indian community. Lack of physical activity can intensify coronary artery disease through serum insulin, body mass index, and serum triglycerides<sup>viii</sup>.

### BREAST CANCER

The risk of breast cancer increases among Asian Indian women living in the United States compared to those living in India.

- In the United States, **1 in 8** Asian Indian women will get breast cancer.
- In India, **1 in 40** women will get breast cancer.

### HEALTH BEHAVIOR AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)

The Center for Disease and Control reports that *1 out of every 4* women within the

United States will have been raped or physically assaulted by an intimate partner during their lifetime<sup>3ix</sup>. Among Asian Indian immigrants, it has been found that cultural, social, and family constraints hinder the women from seeking help.

The same issues also obstruct intimate partner violence policies and programs from being implemented<sup>x</sup>.

**Studies have found that women with history of IPV report 60% more health problems than women with no IPV history<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the U.S. Census Bureau 2000: Asian Indian alone or in any combination.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Enas et al on page 128.

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Campbell et al.

## RESOURCES

Additional information is available on Asian Indian Women's health among the following websites and organizations:

- **Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence**  
<http://www.apiahf.org/apidvinstitute/default.htm>
- **Desi-Fitness.com**  
<http://www.desi-fitness.com/index.htm>
- **Intercultural Cancer Council**  
<http://iccnetwork.org/>
- **KIRAN**  
<http://www.kiraninc.org/index.html>
- **Medline Plus: Asian-American Health**  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/asianamericanhealth.html>
- **National Library of Medicine: Asian American Health**  
<http://asianamericanhealth.nlm.nih.gov/majasian03.html>
- **Sakhi for South Asian Women**  
<http://www.sakhi.com/>
- **SAWNET**  
<http://www.sawnet.org/>
- **South Asian Public Health Association**  
<http://sapha.net/>

## REFERENCES

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<http://www.prb.org/Template.cfm?Section=PRB&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=11320>
- <sup>ii</sup> Embassy of India. (2005). *Embassy of India: India – U.S. Relations*. Retrieved March 9, 2005 from Embassy of India on the World Wide Web:  
<http://www.indianembassy.org/indusrel/comm.htm>
- <sup>iii</sup> United States Census Bureau. 2000 *Census Bureau American Fact Finder*. Retrieved March 9, 2005 from the U.S. Census Bureau on the World Wide Web: <http://www.census.gov/>.
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- <sup>v</sup> United States Census Bureau. 2000 *Census Bureau American Fact Finder*. Retrieved March 9, 2005 from the U.S. Census Bureau on the World Wide Web: <http://www.census.gov/>.
- <sup>vi</sup> Rissam, H.S., Kishore, S., and Trehan, N. (July-September 2001). Coronary Artery Disease in Young Indians – The Missing Link. *Journal, Indian Academy of Clinical Medicine*, 2(3), 128-132.
- <sup>vii</sup> Alagiakrishnan, K. and Chopra, A. (copyright 1998-2004). Health and Health Care of Asian Indian American Elders. Retrieved March 9, 2005 from India Network Health Plans on the World Wide Web: <http://h5.indnet.org/AsianIndianHealth.htm>
- <sup>viii</sup> Dharwan, J., and Bray C.L. (1997). Asian Indians, coronary artery disease, and physical exercise. *Heart*, 78, 550-554.

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<sup>ix</sup> Center for Disease and Control. (November 2004). Intimate Partner Violence: Fact Sheet. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Retrieved January 1, 2005 from the Center for Disease and Control on the World Wide Web:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm>

<sup>x</sup> Shirwadkar, Swati. (August 2004). Canadian Domestic Violence Policy and Indian Immigrant Women. *Violence Against Women*, 10(8), 860-879.