

# THAI AMERICANS

## Women's Health

### HISTORY

The Kingdom of Thailand is located in Southeast Asia and is nestled between several different countries. At the very northern end of the country Thailand borders Laos, Cambodia and Burma. On the far south end the country borders Malaysia. On either side there is water- on the east is the Gulf of Thailand and on the west is the Andaman Sea. The country contains 64 million people<sup>i</sup>. Thailand has had a detailed history with the United States which originated with the Andrew Jackson administration. In 1833 the treaty of Amity and Commerce began the diplomatic ties between the two countries. Thailand has been a strong ally for the United States and many Thai people have fought in several U.S. wars starting with World War I<sup>ii</sup>. Throughout the recent years the relationship between the two countries has wavered due to changes in commercial trade, the war on terror and shifting powers in the Southeastern Asian region, but overall the relationship between the two countries remains strong<sup>ii</sup>

### DEMOGRAPHICS

**82% of Thai people in the U.S. are between 18-64.**

In the 2000 census there were 110,851 Thai peoples, or 0.04% of the United States population, living in the U.S<sup>iii</sup>. When compared to other Asian Americans, the number who report being Thai compose the smallest group of Asian Americans. Overall the Thai population is educated with 38.6% of the population having a bachelor's degree or higher, and then with about 20% of people completing some college<sup>iv</sup>. The median

Median Earnings by sex <sup>iv</sup>	
All Asian American Men	\$40,650
Thai Men	\$32, 879
All Asian American Women	\$31, 049
<b>Thai Women</b>	<b>\$25, 403</b>

family income in 1999 was \$49, 635<sup>iv</sup>**Error! Bookmark not defined..** Many Thai Americans are practicing Buddhists, and these practices influence their daily lives and beliefs<sup>v</sup>

### HEALTH STATUS

Thai women who have immigrated to the United States may or may not speak English, thus limiting their ability of being able to communicate with

medical professionals. Typically surveys do not separate out Thai women, rather they are lumped together with women from other Asian nationalities. The majority of families, 46.9%, do not speak English at home.

### CANCER

Asian American women in general have the third highest rate of breast cancer, but typically have the least frequent occurrence of mammograms<sup>vi</sup>. Asian American women also have the highest rate of not having cervical cancer screenings<sup>vii</sup> which causes high rates in this population. In a study done in Los Angeles, CA it was found that only 59% of women who were over 40 received a mammogram within the past two years<sup>viii</sup>.

**Although having a high rate of breast cancer, Thai women have a low incidence rate of mammograms.**

### BARRIERS

Many Thai American women may not initiate health care because there is a lack of primary care physicians who are culturally competent. Older women or recent immigrants may view this as more of a problem to receiving health care than women who were born in the United States. Both Thai women and men work jobs that do not provide health care<sup>viii</sup>, limiting their access to preventive care and medicine.

### OSTEOPOROSIS

Due to a diet low in calcium, a smaller body mass, more slender frames and different bone density, Thai American women have a high risk of getting osteoporosis as they age. The rate is comparable to whites due to similar bone structure and bone density<sup>vii</sup>. For this reason, Thai women should eat a diet that helps prevent the onset of osteoporosis.

### MORTALITY

Thai American women had the highest rates of mortality due to all cancers combined. 25% of all deaths were caused by heart disease<sup>vii</sup>

**Asian American women have a rate that is comparable to white women of osteoporosis.**

---

**Disclaimer:** This Fact Sheet was created by Allison Lewinski for a class project and is not endorsed by the University of Michigan. The Fact Sheet is not intended for medical advice. Please consult with a licensed medical provider if you have any health concerns.

## RESOURCES

Additional information is available on Thai Women's health and social services from the following organizations and websites.

- **National Women's Health Information Center- Minority Women's Health**  
<http://www.4woman.gov/minority/asian.htm>
- **Health Problems in Asian American/Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian Women**  
[http://www.4woman.gov/faq/Asian\\_Pacific.htm](http://www.4woman.gov/faq/Asian_Pacific.htm)
- **Asian American Health**  
<http://asianamericanhealth.nlm.nih.gov/majasian.html>
- **Medline Plus- Asian American Health**  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/asianamericanhealth.html>
- **CDC- Office of Minority Health**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/omh/>

## REFERENCES

<sup>i</sup> US Department of State Website. Visited March 10, 2005.  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2814.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> Brandon, John and Nancy Chen. (2002). The Asia Foundation: Bilateral Conference of United States- Thailand Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Retrieved on, April 11, 2005 from:  
<http://www.asiafoundation.org/pdf/US-THAIBilateral.pdf#search='history%20of%20thailand%20and%20the%20united%20states'>

<sup>iii</sup> Reeves, Terrance J and Claudette E. Bennett. "We Are the People: Asians In the United States." Issued in December, 2004. Retrieved on April 11, 2005 from:  
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-17.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2000). 2000 Census. Retrieved on April 11, 2005 from:  
<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Limpanichkul, Yaowaluk and Kathy Magilvy. (2004). Managing caregiving at home: Thai caregivers living in the United States. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 11(1): 18-24.

<sup>vi</sup> Department of Health and Human Services. Office of Minority Health: Data and Statistics (2002). Breast Cancer Detection Rates by Race and Ethnicity and Ethnicity Show Importance of Screening for All Age Groups. Retrieved on April 11, 2005 from:  
<http://www.omhrc.gov/OMH/sidebar/datastats3.htm>

<sup>vii</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2003). Office of Women's Health: The Health of Minority Women. Retrieved on April 11, 2005 from:  
<http://www.4woman.gov/owh/pub/minority/services.htm>

<sup>viii</sup> Thai Community Development Center. (2004). Healthcare on the Margins: The Precarious State of Physical Health for Thais in Thai Town. Retrieved on April 11, 2005 from:  
<http://www.thaicdc.org/healthsurvey/healthsurvey.pdf#search='thai%20health%20and%20united%20states'>