

# SWAN UPDATES

## FIRST RESULTS FROM SWAN

The Study of Women Across the Nation (SWAN) began in 1996. Based on questions we asked during the first interview, we are starting to learn some useful information about symptoms that women experience in mid-life. We thought you would be interested in some of the preliminary results.

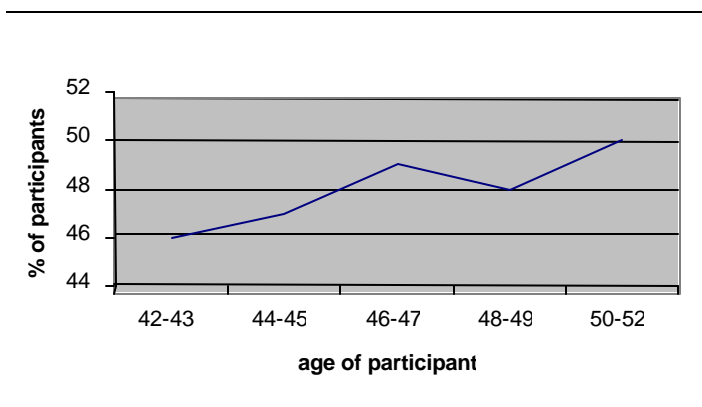
### **Percent of SWAN participants who reported experiencing symptom for 6 or more days in the 2 weeks before their first SWAN interview**

Symptom ↓	%African American	%Caucasian	%Chinese	%Hispanic	%Japanese
Hot Flashes/Flushes	11	6	6	7	6
Stiffness or Soreness	29	29	26	26	31
Forgetfulness	18	16	21	31	16

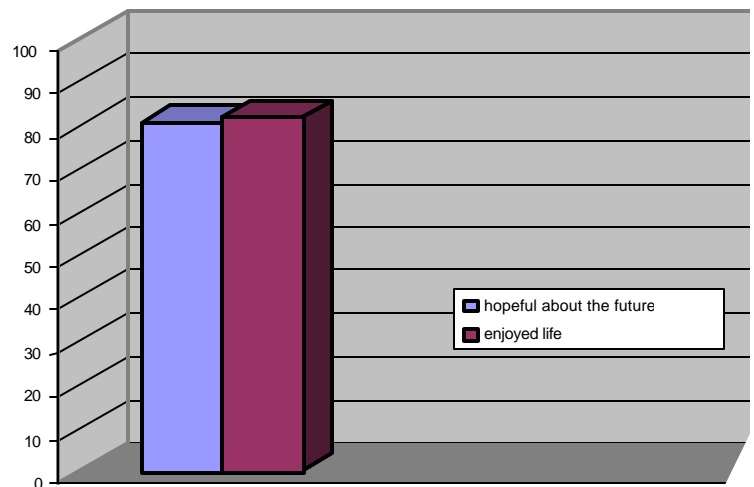
Symptom ↓	42-43 years	44-45 years	46-47 years	48-49 years	50-52 years
Hot Flashes/Flushes	9	11	9	10	10
Stiffness or Soreness	29	28	31	27	28
Forgetfulness	17	19	19	18	15

We have found that many SWAN participants reported feeling quite positive about this period of their lives.

### **Percent of SWAN women having a lot of energy a good bit of the time or more often**



### **Percent of women who reported feeling hopeful about the future or enjoying life for 3 or more days in past week**



The first interview provided a snapshot of women's lives at mid-life. One reason we are doing this study is to learn whether these common symptoms always happen when women get older, or if they are affected by factors like diet, exercise or smoking. Because your lives change from year to year, and because your symptoms may also change, we ask some of the same questions every year so that we can track these changes. Some questions we ask only every few years, since earlier research has shown that change in these areas occurs slowly.

Each year, we ask some new questions about aspects of your life that do not change. In the last few years, we have added items because of questions that you asked us. Other research studies also suggested experiences that may also be changing in this time of your life. For example, we have added questions on how you sleep, how well you remember and your sexuality.

## **SWAN FUNDED FOR ADDITIONAL FIVE YEARS**

In May, 1999 we learned that the National Institute of Aging and National Institute of Nursing Research /National Institutes of Health has funded the SWAN for five more years. During one of these years, we will ask you questions about your diet again. This time we will give a very detailed analysis of how well the diet you report compares to known nutritional requirements. And, since many of us wonder whether our minds are simply too full to remember where we left the house keys or whether our memory really changes, we will include questions to study how our memory is working.

Research that follows people's lives over many years, like the Framingham (MA) Study (started in 1948) has been incredibly valuable in helping health care providers learn about important health issues. For example, the Framingham study was the first to show that high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and smoking all increase the risk of heart disease. (Did you know that before this study, doctors thought that normally everyone's blood pressure increased with age?) This study is still continuing and providing crucial information. Don't be alarmed – we don't think that SWAN will last 50 years!

SWAN is the only study of its kind in the nation. No other study can answer the questions about mid-life that SWAN can answer. There are many things that doctors just don't know about the health of mid-life women, and the information from SWAN will help them to better understand this important time of life.

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## **SWAN UPDATE**

Some of you have been involved in this research since 1996 and will shortly be returning for your fifth visit (others, who enrolled in SWAN later, are returning for their fourth visit)! All of the SWAN staff appreciate your commitment to the study. The Project Directors will be sending this update every few months and we will include a review of research findings from SWAN. Please submit any ideas or questions you have to the Project Director of your site - we want these to be useful to you.