

Our Community. Our Health.

 The Philadelphia Tribune

Independence 

The African American community faces urgent health conditions and concerns including heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, vaccine hesitancy and issues around maternal care. In Philadelphia, the problem is even more urgent, and the pandemic has only made the impact worse. The Our Community. Our Health. campaign acknowledges systemic and historic structures affecting the delivery of medical care and empowers with accurate information and approachable solutions.

In Philadelphia:

- Diabetes rates are higher than national and state levels.
- High blood pressure levels exceed both national and state benchmarks.
- The rate of pregnancy related deaths exceeds the national average.
- African Americans were 2.5 times more likely to be hospitalized for COVID-19 during the pandemic.

Diabetes

In the last 20 years, the rate of diabetes in the U.S. has more than doubled. African Americans are much more likely to be diagnosed with and die from complications related to diabetes than their white counterparts.

- People with diabetes can experience serious health problems like cardiovascular disease, nerve damage, kidney damage, eye damage, skin conditions, depression, and more.
- Diabetes is hereditary. People with a family history of the condition need to be even more careful and mindful about prevention.
- A healthy eating plan and regular exercise are crucial for diabetes prevention and effectively managing blood sugar.

Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in African Americans.

- High blood pressure can lead to a range of health problems, including heart attack, heart failure, stroke, and kidney failure.
- By age 55, 75 percent of African American men and women are likely to develop high blood pressure compared to 55 percent of white men and 40 percent of white women.
- Heart disease can be prevented with regular exercise (30 minutes a day, five days a week), like walking, water aerobics, dancing, biking, etc.
- Limiting salt and saturated fat, quitting smoking, and maintaining a healthy weight can also help reduce the risk of heart disease.

Maternal Health

In Philadelphia, African American women make up 43% of births but account for 73% of pregnancy-associated deaths.

- Transgenerational trauma and general lack of confidence in the health care system can impede much needed care.
- Pre-existing conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, autoimmune diseases, and obesity can increase a woman's risk of complications around her pregnancy.
- Pregnancy-related mortality is defined as the death of a woman during, at delivery, or soon after. Around 700 deaths occur each year in the United States.
- Most pregnancy related deaths are preventable. Maintaining a healthy diet, staying active, seeking prenatal care and quitting all substance use can keep a mother healthy before the birth of her child.

Vaccinations

Vaccines are an important tool in combatting communicable infections and illnesses, preventing serious illness or death, and stemming the transmission of those diseases.

- Find a medical provider you trust. Someone who comes from a similar background or is culturally competent can make a difference when it comes to overcoming vaccine hesitancy in the African American community.
- Learn which vaccines are right for you. The vaccines you need may change over time with age, certain health conditions and lifestyle habits.