

FREE!

# TAKING CARE OF US



An African American's  
Guide to Healthy Living



## Taking Charge of Your Health Care

African Americans experience illness and disease at higher rates and more intensely than many other racial or ethnic groups. Some of the factors that lead to racial health disparities include lack of health coverage, health providers that do not understand diverse cultural needs, patients who feel unable to trust the health care system and doctors who do not have enough time to spend with patients. We may not be able to change the health care system overnight but there are steps we can take that will help us get the health care that we need.

This guide was designed to help you take control of your health. Take charge by making the most of your visits and by knowing the facts about health problems that most frequently effect African Americans.

Learn tips on how to interact with the world of health care, how to live a healthy lifestyle, where to find additional information about health care topics, and what health conditions may be putting you at risk. This health guide provides basic information on nutrition, exercise, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, chronic health conditions like diabetes, and substance use and abuse.



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# Prepare for Health Care: Making the Most of Your Health Care Visits

Linking into health care and accessing the services that the system offers can be hard. It can be really difficult if you do not have a regular doctor, if you struggle to cover the costs of medical care, or if you do not understand the medical words that doctors sometimes use. Because of these reasons, many serious health problems go untreated.

This chapter of *Taking Care of Us* aims to guide you through some of the hardest steps of accessing good medical care so that you are able to see a doctor when you need to. This section will also help you make the most of each and every visit!

## Finding a Doctor

### How can I find a health care provider who understands me?

It is important for you to feel comfortable with your medical provider so that you can be open and honest with him or her. If you do not feel like your physician gives you the time or attention you need, consider bringing this up during a visit or think about finding a new doctor. You should always feel like you can ask your physician and the nursing staff questions about your care and treatment. Your health depends on it!

- Check with family and friends to see if they have any recommendations.
- Contact your insurance company to see which facilities and physicians are covered by your policy.
- Visit one of the following websites or call **1-888-753-6286** (toll free) for information on African American medical providers in your area:
  - Medical Provider Directory—<http://www.nmanet.org>
  - Physician Directory—<http://www.blackdoctor.org>
  - Dentist Directory—<http://www.ndaonline.org>



# Health Coverage: What to Know About Benefits

## Traditional health insurance

Many employers offer some type of health insurance coverage to employees and their spouses or domestic partners. If this is an option for you, consider electing this policy. To make the most of your coverage, become familiar with what the policy does and does not cover. Insurance varies with different policies so contact your insurance company to find out what your benefits include.

**Some insurance terms you should be familiar with are:**

- **Premium**—The amount you pay to have health insurance. This amount varies depending on your place of employment and how many people are covered by your policy. Premiums are often paid on a monthly basis and may be taken out of your paycheck.
- **Deductible**—The amount the insured person has to pay before any benefits from the insurance policy can be used.
- **Co-pay**—The payment that the insured person must pay for each doctor visit and prescription.
- **Pre-Existing Condition**—A condition that is present before you apply for health insurance. It is important to have health insurance when you are healthy because if diagnosed with a serious condition while uninsured, it may be hard to find affordable health insurance.

## Medicare

If you are a senior, have been disabled for at least two years, or have end stage liver failure, you may be eligible for Medicare. Contact the **Social Security Administration** at **1-800-633-4227** for more information about benefits you may be able to access.

Like traditional employer based health insurance, you may have monthly premiums, a deductible, and co-pays for doctor visits and prescriptions. If you have a lower income, you may be eligible to receive extra benefits through Medicaid to help cover the costs you cannot afford.

## Medicaid

If you have a lower income, are disabled, have children, or are pregnant, you may be eligible for Medicaid. Contact your county's Job and Family Services (JFS) office to find out more information about this type of help.

The application process for Medicaid benefits can be difficult and time consuming, but do not lose heart! If you meet the eligibility rules and you complete all the steps of the application process, you should be approved for Medicaid assistance.

**Prepare yourself for the application process by collecting the following documents for your JFS appointment:**

- Proof of medical costs for people with disabilities or for people over 60
- Proof of value of stocks/bonds, life insurance, trusts, annuities
- Proof of child support paid to children not living with you
- Proof of child/dependent care costs (if applicable)
- Proof of health insurance (if applicable)
- Most recent bank statements
- Green Card (if not a citizen)
- Proof of vehicle ownership
- Proof of identification
- Social Security Card
- Proof of citizenship
- Proof of income



## How can I see a doctor if I do not have health coverage?

**If you have a health problem that seems relatively easy to treat:**

Consider going to a free clinic or a neighborhood health center. Often, they treat patients for minor illnesses even if they are unable to pay for the visit. Contact the Ohio Association of Free Clinics at **(614) 221-6494** to find a free clinic in your area.

**If you have a health problem that seems serious or is an emergency:**

Consider going to an emergency room. Even if you cannot pay for the visit or the procedure, you will not be turned away. Many hospitals now have patient advocates who can help reduce the cost of services if you are unable to pay for them. Ignoring a serious health problem will only make it worse.

## Your Family Medical Tree

Many conditions, like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, mental illness, asthma, and lupus run in families. Talk to your immediate family about their health history so you can learn what conditions you may be at risk for getting. Providing a family health history to your doctor will help him or her create a health plan that addresses your specific health needs.

Condition	Condition Details: Type, Severity, Etc.	
Cancer: Prostate, Breast, Lung, Colorectal, Other-		
Diabetes: High or low Sugar-		
Hypertension: High Blood Pressure-		
Heart Disease: Heart Attack, Heart Failure-		
Osteoporosis: Thinning Bones-		
Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia-		
Autoimmune Disease: Lupus-		
Mental Illness: Depression, Anxiety, Other-		
High Cholesterol-		
Stroke-		
Lung Disease: Asthma, COPD, Other-		
Gastrointestinal Disorders-		
Other (Specify)-		



## What to Do Before, During and After Your Visit

### Before your visit:

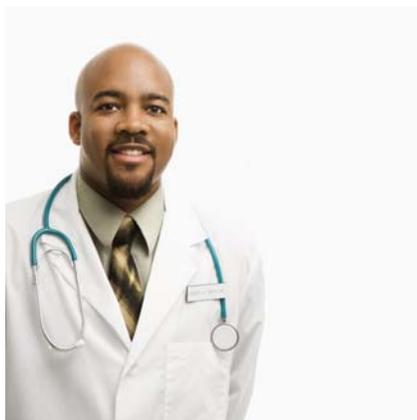
- Learn the health histories of both you and your family. Complete the Family Medical Tree on pages 8 and 9 and bring it with you to your next appointment. Make a copy for your doctor.
- Create a written list of questions or concerns.
- Be familiar with the health conditions that you have and the medications you are being prescribed.
- Locate your health coverage card(s) or information and bring them to every appointment.

### During your appointment:

- Answer all of the medical professional's questions completely and honestly.
- If you think there is something important they should know that they did not ask you about, tell them.
- Do not hesitate to ask questions when something they have said does not make sense or if you want more detail. Doctors and nurses are there to help you, so make use of their skills and knowledge.
- Take notes about your diagnosis (description of what is wrong), prognosis (description of what is likely to happen with the condition in the future) and treatment instructions.

### After each visit:

- Follow the treatment plan that you and your health care provider create.
- Keep track of any changes in symptoms you experience.
- Contact your medical professional if you have concerns about changes in your health.
- When getting prescriptions filled, talk to your pharmacist about drug interactions and side effects.
- If the medications you are prescribed cause bad side effects, contact your doctor to make sure they are normal and safe.



## General Health Resources

### Websites:

<http://www.blackdoctor.org>

**1-888-753-6286 (toll free for locating a doctor in your area)**

BlackDoctor.org is a non-profit organization that provides strategies, tactics and health advice to help consumers live healthier lives. The website and toll free number also provide free referrals to black doctors in your area.

<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/fhh-web/home.action>

The Surgeon General sponsors this website and offers an electronic tool for you to input your family's health history. The tool organizes your family's health information into diagrams that you may wish to show your healthcare provider.

<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov>

**1-800-444-6472**

The Office of Minority Health gives health information about issues that affect minorities. The referral phone number listed above can help link you to health resources and health care providers.

<http://www.nmanet.org>

The National Medical Association is a non-profit organization that provides health information about a variety of health conditions. Their website has a tool you can use to find African American doctors in your region.

### Benefits Resources:

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/OHP/index.stm>

**1-800-324-8680**

Visit this website to learn more about applying for Ohio's Medicaid program or go to your county's Job and Family Services Office.

<http://www.medicare.gov>

**1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)**

The US government's official website about Medicare benefits. Learn how to apply for and use these benefits.

<http://www.ohioinsurance.gov>

**1-800-686-1526**

The Ohio Department of Insurance helps you find and access health insurance information. They can answer many insurance related questions.

# The Total Package:

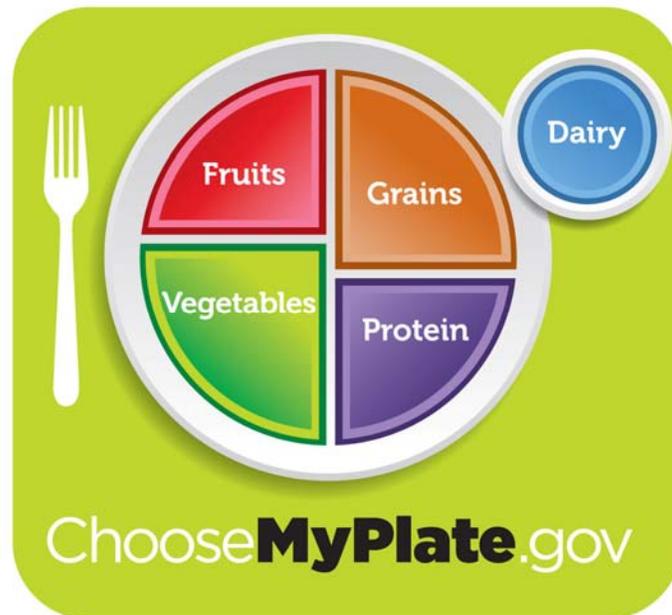
## Nutrition and Exercise

It can be hard to keep a balanced diet and a healthy weight with today's busy schedules but when 4 out of 5 African American women and over 3 out of 5 African American men are overweight or obese, it is time to take the matter of weight management to heart [1 and 2]. Poor diet and exercise habits can result in serious health problems like hypertension (high blood pressure), heart disease, stroke, kidney disease or diabetes.

By achieving a healthy lifestyle and a healthy weight, you are helping to prevent serious health problems down the road. If you already have health complications, managing a healthy weight will help you control those conditions.

### Nutrition Basics

The human body needs healthy sources of energy to work well. The food pyramid below outlines what a well balanced diet looks like. If you have food restrictions like food allergies or a vegetarian diet, check out <http://www.choosemyplate.gov> for a foods that addresses your specific needs. The page to the right gives the dietary guidelines regarding balancing calories, foods to increase and foods to reduce.



Source 1: Office on Women's Health. 2007. <http://www.4women.gov/minority/africanamerican/obesity.cfm> Source 2: CDC, 2008. Health United States, 2008. Table 75. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/08.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/08.pdf)



## Dietary Guidelines 2010 Selected Messages for Consumers

Take action on the Dietary Guidelines by making changes in these three areas.

Choose steps that work for you and start today.

### ***Balancing Calories***

- Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- Avoid oversized portions.

### ***Foods to Increase***

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Make at least half your grains whole grains.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.

### ***Foods to Reduce***

- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals—and choose the foods with lower numbers.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.



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## What are calories and how many do I need?



No, calories are not the enemy! We need the energy they give us to function day-to-day. To maintain a healthy weight, you should aim to consume the right number of calories for your body type, gender, age and lifestyle. The chart below estimates how many calories your body needs each day.

	Estimated Daily Calorie Needs	
	Sedentary	Active
	Lifestyle that includes only light day-to-day activity.	Lifestyle that includes activity equal to walking at least 3 miles per day.
<b>Children-2-3 years</b>	1,000	1,400
<b>Females</b>		
4-8 years	1,200	1,800
9-13	1,600	2,200
14-18	1,800	2,400
19-30	2,000	2,400
31-50	1,800	2,200
51+	1,600	2,200
<b>Males</b>		
4-8 years	1,400	2,000
9-13	1,800	2,600
14-18	2,200	3,200
19-30	2,400	3,000
31-50	2,200	3,000
51+	2,000	2,800

Source 1: U.S. Department of Agriculture. Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. April 2005.  
<http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

## How Can I Have a Healthy Body?

There are healthy steps you can take to manage your weight and improve your health, but because everyone's habits and bodies are different, approaches to weight loss will have to be adapted to meet your needs. By taking steps now to keep extra weight off, you are helping to prevent serious health conditions from forming in the future.

### Try some of these tips to help control your weight:

If you cannot change **WHAT** you eat, change **HOW MUCH** you eat.

- Read food labels to see how much a serving size is.
- If the portions at a restaurant are big, split a meal with a friend or family member or bring a portion home to eat the next day. This saves money too!

**Make every calorie count.**

- Eat more fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins.
- Do not cut out any one food group from your diet but limit salt, sugar, trans and saturated fat intake.

**Eat meals slowly.**

- It can take almost thirty minutes to digest food and begin to feel full.
- Give your stomach a chance to "tell" your brain that it is full.

**Make changes gradually.**

- Set one goal at a time and keep it for several weeks before adding a new one.
- Aim to lose no more than one or two pounds per week.

**Drink plenty of water.**

- Instead of drinking soda, alcohol or sugary juices, have water instead. Beverages like these have a lot of calories packed into them.
- Aim to drink eight glasses of water each day.

**Get enough sleep each night.**

- Aim for eight hours of sleep each night.
- Studies show that a lack of sleep can lead to weight gain.

Reaching your health goal is not always easy. If you have a bad week, month, or even year, don't give up! The key is to find the right plan for you!

# Healthy Home Cookin'

## Tips for Buying and Eating Healthy Foods

- When preparing a shopping list, plan out the meals you will be eating that week. Consider how much cooking time will be available.
- Eat before going to the store. This will help you make purchases that are based on need instead of hunger pains.
- Buy fresh produce whenever possible.
- If buying canned fruit, look for low sugar varieties and when buying canned vegetables, look for low sodium options.
- Frozen meals can be quick alternatives to cooking from scratch. Pick low-fat and low sodium versions with small portion sizes.
- If you consume dairy, purchase low-fat or no-fat products. Consider trying dairy free products like soy milk.
- Focus your shopping trip on the border of the grocery store. That is often where the healthiest foods are kept.
- When shopping for protein, choose lean items such as white-meat poultry, fresh fish or beans.

Choose produce that looks fresh and colorful. Each color offers different nutrients so eat a wide variety of them.



# Healthy Home Cookin' Shopping List

Use this shopping list as a guide when you go to the grocery store. These items will help you create healthy meals that provide the nutrients you need.

## Produce & Fruits

- Cucumber
- Green or Red Pepper
- Onions
- Garlic
- Tomatoes
- Zucchini
- Bananas
- Apples
- Peaches
- Strawberries
- Blueberries

## Complex Carbohydrates

- Oatmeal
- Sweet potatoes (yams)
- Beans (pinto, black, kidney)
- Oat bran cereal
- Brown or wild rice
- Farina (Cream of Wheat)
- Multigrain hot cereal
- Whole wheat pasta
- Potatoes (red, baking, new)
- Whole grain bread
- Barley

## Dairy & Eggs

- Low-fat cottage cheese
- Eggs
- Low-fat or non-fat milk
- Low-fat yogurt

## Beverages

- Water
- Juice (low in sugar)
- Low-fat or non-fat milk
- Soy/rice/almond or hemp milk

## Proteins

- Boneless, skinless chicken breast
- Tuna (water packed)
- Fish (salmon, sea bass, halibut)
- Shrimp
- Extra lean ground beef
- Egg whites or eggs
- Top round steaks or roast
- Extra lean ground turkey
- Beans (black eyed peas, lima, lentils)
- Tofu/Soy products
- Nuts (almonds, cashews, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, peanuts)

## Fibrous Carbohydrates/Veggies

- Green leafy lettuce
- Broccoli
- Asparagus
- Green beans
- Collard greens
- Bell peppers
- Brussels sprouts
- Cauliflower
- Eggplant
- Okra

## Healthy Fats

- Peanut butter
- Olive oil or safflower oil
- Flaxseed oil
- Nuts
- Seeds



## Healthy Home Cooking Sample Menus

The sample menus below provide some great meal suggestions that will help you stick with a 2,000 calories per day diet. These meal ideas come from <http://www.mypyramid.gov>.

Visit this website or <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/chdblack/cooking.pdf> for other healthy home cooking recipes.

<u>Day 1</u>	<u>Day 2</u>
<b>BREAKFAST</b> 1 whole wheat English muffin 2 tsp soft margarine 1 tbsp jam or preserves 1 medium grapefruit 1 hard-cooked egg 1 unsweetened beverage	<b>BREAKFAST</b> French toast 2 slices whole wheat French toast 2 tsp soft margarine 2 tbsp maple syrup 1/2 medium grapefruit 1 cup fat-free milk or soy milk
<b>LUNCH</b> White bean vegetable soup 1 1/4 cup chunky vegetable soup 1/2 cup white beans 2 ounce breadstick 8 baby carrots 1 cup fat-free milk	<b>LUNCH</b> Vegetarian chili on baked potato 1 cup kidney beans 1/2 cup tomato sauce 3 tbsp chopped onions 1 ounce low-fat cheddar cheese 1 tsp vegetable oil 1 medium baked potato 1/2 cup cantaloupe 3/4 cup lemonade
<b>DINNER</b> Rigatoni with meat sauce (or meat replacement) 1 cup rigatoni pasta ( 2 ounces dry) 1/2 cup tomato sauce 2 ounces extra lean coked ground beef (or meat substitute) sautéed in 2 tsp vegetable oil 3 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese Spinach Salad 1 cup baby spinach leaves 1/2 cup tangerine slices 1/2 ounce chopped walnuts 3 tsp sunflower oil and vinegar dressing 1 cup fat-free milk or soy milk	<b>DINNER</b> Roasted chicken breast 3 ounces boneless skinless chicken breast 1 large baked sweet potato 1/2 cup peas and onions 1 tsp soft margarine 1 ounce whole wheat dinner roll 1 tsp soft margarine 1 cup leafy greens salad 3 tsp sunflower oil and vinegar dressing
<b>SNACKS</b> 1 cup low-fat yogurt	<b>SNACKS</b> 5 whole wheat crackers 1/8 cup hummus

## Workin' It: Tips for Moving toward Good Health

### See your physician before starting an exercise program.

- It is always a good idea to see your doctor before making any major changes.
- If you are severely overweight or have other serious health conditions you should work closely with your doctor to create a health plan specifically for your needs.

### Workout several times a week.

- Exercise for thirty minutes, three times a week.
- Combine cardio and strength training work outs for faster results. Women—that means you too! Weight training will not make you bulk up. It will tone your muscles and help you burn calories faster than with cardio alone.

### Try these activities to get moving.

Take the stairs instead of the elevator	Take a walk during your lunch break
Do leg lifts at your desk	Park far away
Basketball	Do jumping jacks
Dance	Clean the house



## What is the right weight for me?

There is no one perfect weight—only an ideal weight range. Keep in mind that if you have a larger bone structure or a more muscular build, you may have a higher weight, but are still healthy.

Similarly, just because someone is thin does not mean that they are healthy. For instance, a thin person can still have high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

Despite this, weight is a good indicator of health and should be used to guide you on your path to healthy living. The chart below is a guide for men, and the chart on the next page is for women.

Male Height to Weight Ratio			
Height	Low Weight	Target Weight	High Weight
5'1"	123	134	145
5'2"	125	137	148
5'3"	127	139	151
5'4"	129	142	155
5'5"	131	145	159
5'6"	133	148	163
5'7"	135	151	167
5'8"	137	154	171
5'9"	139	157	175
5'10"	141	160	179
5'11"	144	164	183
6'0"	147	167	187
6'1"	150	171	192
6'2"	153	175	197
6'3"	157	179	202

It can take time to see the results of your hard work and unfortunately, the scale does not always show the improvements that your body is making.

Measuring the changes in your waist size might give you a better idea of whether or not you are on track with your health plan.



Female Height to Weight Ratio			
Height	Low Weight	Target Weight	High Weight
4'10"	100	115	131
4'11"	101	117	134
5'0"	103	120	137
5'1"	105	122	140
5'2"	108	125	144
5'3"	111	128	148
5'4"	114	133	152
5'5"	117	136	156
5'6"	120	140	160
5'7"	123	143	164
5'8"	126	146	167
5'9"	129	150	170
5'10"	132	153	173
5'11"	135	156	176
6'0"	138	159	179

# Physical Fitness Log

Try using a physical fitness log like this to help you keep track of your exercise progress. Over time, you will see improvements to the amount of cardio you can do, the weight you can lift and the amount of time you can work out.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

How am I feeling today? \_\_\_\_\_

Current Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Waist Measurement \_\_\_\_\_ (inches)

## Strength Training Log

Muscle Group	Exercise/Machine	Weight/Repetitions
Chest		
Back		
Shoulders		
Triceps		
Biceps		
Quadriceps		
Hamstrings		
Calves		
Abs		

## Cardio Training Log

Exercise/Machine	Distance/Time

## Healthy Lifestyle Resources

### Websites:

<http://www.blackdoctor.org>

**1-888-753-6286 (toll free for locating a doctor in your area)**

BlackDoctor.org is a non-profit organization that provides strategies, tactics and health advice to help consumers live healthier lives. The website provides tips for achieving health through good diet and exercise choices.

<http://www.diabetes.org>

The Diabetes Association's website has information on weight control and nutrition for individuals who have diabetes. This site also has a section that addresses the specific needs of African Americans.

<http://www.pyramid.gov>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides great suggestions for eating a well balanced diet. The website provides food pyramids for specialized diets.

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/chdblack/cooking.pdf>

This website, sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Services, offers a cookbook called Heart Healthy Home Cooking African American Style. Print a copy out or view it online to create healthy yet delicious meals for you and your family.



# Protect Yourself:

## Get the Facts about Sexual Health

Sexual health is not always easy to talk about but because there are many risks connected to having sex, it is important to be able to have real conversations with your medical provider about it. For women, once you are sexually active, or over the age of 18, it is important to see a gynecologist every year. Special tests like pap smears will be done to make sure there are no abnormal cells present.

While many gynecologists do perform tests to detect sexually transmitted infections, some do not. If you are sexually active, you should consider asking your gynecologist to run tests for sexually transmitted infections or go to a local sexual health clinic.

Men should either talk to their family physicians about testing for sexually transmitted infections or go to a local sexual health clinic. To find a test site near you, contact the Ohio AIDS/HIV/STD hotline at **1-800-332-2437**.

Most Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) can either be cured or treated but if not caught early enough, they can lead to major medical problems like infertility (inability to have children), brain damage or increased risk of cancer. There are STIs that can be fatal if ignored for too long. For some people, STIs do not cause any symptoms so unless you are tested for them, you may not know you have one.

You may be used to hearing STIs referred to as STDs, or sexually transmitted diseases. They mean the same thing.



**The only way to know for sure that you do not have a sexually transmitted infection, is to be tested.**

## Sexually Transmitted Infections: Could You Be At Risk?

Sexually transmitted infections continue to affect African Americans at higher rates than any other racial or ethnic group in the U.S. In 2005, blacks (including African Americans,) were about 18 times as likely as whites to have gonorrhea and about 5 times as likely to have Syphilis [1]. STIs are so common that one out of five Americans has an STI.

### How can you avoid getting an STI?

- Abstain from sex until you are with someone you can trust.
- If you are sexually active, use condoms every time for vaginal, oral, and anal sex.
- Women-consider using female condoms if your male partner is unwilling to use a traditional condom.
- Use dental dams (piece of latex) or flavored condoms during oral sex.
- Use water-based lubrication with condoms. Oil-based lubrication will break condoms.
- Get an STI test once a year. If you have symptoms, get tested immediately.
- Ask your partners if they have been tested. If they have not, wait to have sex until they have been tested.
- Birth control pills will not protect you from STIs.
- There is now a vaccine that protects women against four different kinds of Human Papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes some types of genital warts and cervical cancer. Consider getting this vaccine if you are sexually active, especially if you are between the ages of 9 and 26.

The spread of most STIs can be prevented by using condoms, however, there is a chance that you can get herpes, syphilis or HPV by genital rubbing or skin-to-skin contact.

To learn more about specific STIs, check out the chart on page 26 and 27. It provides information on the most common STIs. For information about HIV/AIDS, turn to page 28.

Source 1: CDC. *Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance*, 2005. Atlanta: US Department of Health and Human Services, November 2006. Accessed January 19, 2009.

	<b>Chlamydia</b>	<b>Trichomoniasis</b>	<b>Gonorrhea</b>
<b>What it is</b>	A sexually transmitted disease caused by a bacteria. The bacteria may grow in the reproductive tract, throat, or anus, based on the mode of exposure.	An infection in the genital area caused by a parasite.	A sexually transmitted disease caused by a bacteria. The bacteria can grow in warm, moist areas like the reproductive tract, urethra, mouth, throat, eyes and anus.
<b>How many get it</b>	It is the most commonly reported bacterial STI in the US. About 3 million new cases occur each year.	There are about 7.4 million new cases each year. It is the most common curable STI in young, sexually active women.	More than 700,000 new infections occur each year.
<b>Signs/ Symptoms</b>	There are typically no symptoms; however, some individuals may experience an unusual discharge or pain during urination up to three weeks after exposure.	There are often no symptoms but men could have burning during urination or intercourse. Women may experience symptoms like yellow-green vaginal discharge with a strong, fishy odor. Pain during intercourse and urination may be present.	Most see no symptoms; possible for burning while urinating, unusual vaginal, penile, or rectal discharge; can be mistaken for a bladder infection.
<b>How it is spread</b>	Unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex.	Unprotected penis-to-vagina intercourse or vulva-to-vulva contact with an infected partner.	Unprotected contact with an infected penis, vagina, anus, or mouth.
<b>Treatment</b>	Oral antibiotics cure the infection; both partners must be treated at the same time and refrain from sexual activity until they complete treatment to prevent re-infection.	Oral antibiotics cure the infection; both partners must be treated at the same time and refrain from sexual activity until they complete treatment to prevent re-infection.	Oral antibiotics can cure the infection however drug resistant strains are becoming more common. Both partners must be treated at the same time and refrain from sexual activity until they complete treatment to prevent re-infection.
<b>Possible consequences</b>	Reproductive health problems such as infertility or for women, pelvic inflammatory disease.	Common for this infection to happen again and again, also increases risk of HIV infection. For women, the infection may also cause pregnancy complications.	Sterility and increases risk of HIV infection. For woman may also cause infection to spread to the uterus or fallopian tubes, pregnancy problems, or pelvic inflammatory disease.
<b>Testing</b>	Urine test; swab test of the infected area.	Physical exam, laboratory test; swab from vaginal or penile secretions.	Urine test; swab test of the infected area.

Source 1: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Retrieved July 2009. <http://www.cdc.gov/STD/default.htm>.

<b>Genital Herpes</b>	<b>Syphilis</b>	<b>Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)</b>	<b>Human Papillomavirus (HPV or Warts)</b>
An infection of the mouth (Herpes 1) or genital area (Herpes 2) caused by a virus.	An infection caused by bacteria that can spread throughout the body.	A contagious liver disease caused by a virus.	An infection typically in the genital area that is caused by a virus; over 100 types.
About one in four women and one in eight men contract genital herpes. Approximately 45 million cases already exist.	About 70,000 new cases occur each year.	Approximately 77,000 new cases occur a year from unprotected sexual activity.	About 6.2 million people become newly infected each year.
Most see no symptoms. Some experience red bumps that turn into painful blisters or have flu-like symptoms that may develop within two weeks of infection.	Often no symptoms appear; eventually there may be a single sore, then a skin rash; frequently signs are similar to those of other diseases so it can be difficult to diagnose.	Symptoms are often not experienced, but when they are, they consist of tiredness, aches, pains, tenderness of the stomach, or yellowing of the skin and eyes.	Many people do not have symptoms but are still contagious; genital warts can appear up to three months after exposure.
Unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex as well as touching an infected area. Some people may be contagious even when they do not have symptoms or infected area is not noticeable.	Unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex or to a baby through childbirth. Also, direct contact with a sore in the infected area on the external genitals, anus, or rectum.	Unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex, sharing contaminated needles, exposure to infected blood, semen, vaginal secretions, or saliva (the chance of getting through kissing is low).	Unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex; touching an infected area.
Antiviral medications can help shorten and prevent herpes outbreaks but there is no cure.	Antibiotics can easily cure in its early stages but cannot undo damage that has already been done. Both partners must be treated at the same time and refrain from sexual activity until the sores are healed.	A vaccine is available to prevent becoming infected; after infection, most cases clear up within two months and during this time alcohol should be avoided.	Warts can be removed through surgery or medication but there is no cure.
Recurrent sores; passing the virus on to others.	Left untreated, the infection can spread and damage the brain, heart, nervous system, eyes, bones, joints, blood vessels, and muscles. Can also cause serious pregnancy complications.	Can become chronic and cause serious damage to the liver.	Increased risk of genital cancer for both men and women.
Swab test of the infected area; blood test; physical exam if symptoms are present.	Blood test.	Blood test.	Pap smear (women); visual exam if symptoms are present; swab of the infected area.

## HIV/AIDS 101

The HIV epidemic has had devastating effects on the African American community. In 2012, African Americans comprised 14 percent of the population, but accounted for 44% of all new HIV infections. [1]. At some point in their lifetime, an estimated 1 in 16 Black males and 1 in 32 Black females will be diagnosed with HIV infection.[2]. These alarming statistics speak loudly about the need for continued awareness and HIV education efforts within our community.

This section will help you learn more about HIV/AIDS, understand what the HIV testing process is like and what to do if you are HIV positive.

### What is HIV ?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It stands for:

#### Human

- This virus can only be spread through humans.
- It cannot be spread by animals– including mosquitoes!

#### Immunodeficiency (im-yuh-noh-di-fish-uhn-see)

- This virus attacks and depletes the CD4 cells of the immune system. CD4 cells protect the body from infections.
- Without CD4 cells, the immune system has trouble fighting infections.

#### Virus

- Viruses cannot be cured with antibiotics.
- This virus is fragile and cannot survive outside the body. It cannot be spread through air, water or food.

### What is AIDS?

AIDS is a collection of diseases that form because HIV has weakened the body's immune system. It stands for:

#### Acquired

- Contracted from direct contact with another person's infectious body fluids.

#### Immune

- A disease of the immune system.

#### Deficiency

- Fewer CD4 cells than is normal.

#### Syndrome

- A series or collection of illnesses that together, make up a specific disease.

Source 1: CDC. Monitoring selected national HIV prevention and care objectives by using HIV surveillance data—United States and 6 U.S. dependent areas —2010. HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report 2012;17(No. 3, part A). [http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/surveillance/resources/reports/2010supp\\_vol17no3/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/surveillance/resources/reports/2010supp_vol17no3/index.htm). Published June 2012. Source 2: CDC. Estimated HIV incidence in the United States, 2007–2010. HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report 2012;17(No. 4). <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/#supplemental>. Published December 2012.

## Facts about HIV transmission

### HIV IS transmitted from:

- Blood
- Semen
- Vaginal Fluids
- Breast Milk

### HIV IS NOT transmitted from:

- Tears
- Saliva
- Sweat
- Urine
- Feces
- Vomit
- Ear Wax

## Myths about HIV

***Myth: HIV is manmade and was created to destroy certain groups of people.***

***Fact:*** Governments, or any other human beings, do not have the ability to create viruses. Scientists believe that an animal-based strain of HIV existed for thousands of years before mutating into a form that could infect humans.

***Myth: There is a cure for HIV but it is being withheld from the public.***

***Fact:*** While there are effective treatments available to help people manage HIV, there is no cure. People like Magic Johnson, who have lived many years with HIV, have done so because they have received ongoing medical care.

***Myth: You can get HIV from kissing someone who is HIV positive.***

***Fact:*** Saliva cannot transmit HIV so there is virtually no risk of getting HIV by kissing someone who is HIV positive. As long as there is no blood, semen, vaginal fluid, or breast milk present, casual contact like kissing is completely safe.

***Myth: Women cannot give men HIV.***

***Fact:*** If a woman is HIV positive, it is possible for her to transmit HIV to her partner(s) through vaginal fluids or blood. Using barrier methods like condoms can help prevent the spread of HIV.



# How Can I Avoid Getting HIV or Giving it to Others?

HIV can be spread through sexual contact, from sharing needles, by being exposed to blood and from mothers to their babies. By taking the following precautions, you can help prevent the spread of HIV.

## Sexual Contact

- Abstaining from sex is the only 100% sure way to avoid HIV sexually.
- Use latex or polyurethane condoms every single time for every kind of sex.
- Use a water based lubricant with condoms. Oil based lubrication like Vaseline or lotion will break the condom.
- Talk to your partners about their sexual history and HIV testing history.
- Binge drinking or using drugs can affect your ability to make safe decisions so it may be a good idea to avoid combining sex and substance use.

## Sharing Needles

- Injecting illegal drugs puts you at a high risk for acquiring HIV. If you do use illegal drugs and you cannot stop, use clean needles and supplies every time.
- If you must share needles: Fill and empty with water, fill with bleach, leave in the syringe for 30 seconds and rinse the syringe three times with water.
- Go to professional piercers and tattoo facilities where they sterilize equipment and use licensed practitioners.

## Universal Precautions

- If you work in the healthcare field, following precautions like disposing of sharps properly and using gloves and other barriers will go far to protect you from HIV.
- During emergency situations when someone else's blood is exposed, always use a barrier to keep the blood separate from your hands and skin.

## Mother to Baby

- If you are pregnant and living with HIV, there are several things you can do to reduce the risk of passing HIV on to your baby. When the following steps are followed, the risk of HIV transmission to your baby drops from 25% to 1%.
- Take a three drug combination of antiretroviral medications (special HIV drugs).
- Have a Caesarean section (a procedure in which the baby is removed from the mother's womb through an incision in the abdomen).
- Do not breastfeed.



## Condoms 101

- Store condoms in a cool, dry place. They should not be kept in pockets or wallets for long periods of time.
- Always use polyurethane or latex condoms and dental dams. Animal skin condoms do not protect against STIs (including HIV).
- Check out the expiration date on the condom package. If it is past the expiration date, get a new condom.
- Open the condom package slowly with your fingers. Teeth or scissors could rip the condom.
- Do not use the condom if it appears to be ripped, dry, sticky or stiff.
- Use a water based lubricant inside and outside the condom. Oil-based lubricants like body lotion, Vaseline, or vegetable oil can cause the condom to break.
- Leave a half-inch of space at the tip of the rolled down condom to collect semen.
- If you start to roll the condom down inside-out, throw it away and get a new one. It is a good idea to keep several extras around.
- Remove the condom right after ejaculation. Wrap the condom in a tissue and put it in the trash right away.

Condoms come in a variety of colors and sizes. To play it safe during oral sex, try using a flavored condom.



## Testing for HIV

It is impossible to tell by looking at someone that they are HIV positive or HIV negative. Often, there are no early symptoms of HIV infection so someone could be infected for years without knowing. Even when there are no symptoms present, the HIV is causing harm to the body. Medical professionals agree that the earlier HIV infection is detected, the more that can be done to help the immune system stay strong.

Most testing centers in Ohio offer a 20-minute rapid test. It is over 99 percent accurate. Some test sites still draw blood for the rapid test, but many use cells from an oral sample. When HIV enters the body, the immune system creates antibodies (proteins) to fight off the HIV. These antibodies are what the test looks for. If HIV antibodies are present in the body, the HIV test will be positive.

### What is the HIV testing process like?



**This woman is illustrating how an HIV test is done using the oral swab method.**

- She simply wipes the testing strip along her gums.
- The test counselor places it in a special testing solution.
- The test processes for twenty minutes.
- While the test is processing, the test counselor and client discuss ways that she can protect herself from HIV in the future.
- The test counselor reviews the test results with the woman.
- Depending on the test result, the woman will be given referrals to community resources that will help her access needed services.

Source 1: CDC. *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, 2005. Vol. 17. Rev ed. Atlanta: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2007:n1-46. Accessed September 15, 2008. Source 2: McQuillan GM et al. NCHS Data Brief. No. 4: January 2008 (ages 18-49). Retrieved <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db04.htm>. January 2009.

## How do I know if I need an HIV test?

If you are unsure of whether or not you should be tested for HIV, complete the self assessment below. If you check any of the statements, it is a good idea for you to be tested.

- You or your partner have had sex with someone without a condom.
- You or your partner have had sex for money, drugs, or something you needed.
- The condom broke when you were having sex.
- You or your partner have shared needles for drugs.
- You have had sex while drunk or high.
- You have slept with someone you did not know.
- You or your partner have paid for sex.
- You are pregnant or thinking about having a baby.
- You have had a sexually transmitted infection.
- You have been sexually assaulted.



**If the HIV test is positive**, that means HIV antibodies were found.

- The test counselor will offer you a second, confirmatory test to make sure that the positive result is correct. The result from this second test will take about a week for you to receive.
- If the confirmatory test is also positive, you should schedule a visit with an infectious disease specialist. He or she will run some tests to see how healthy you are and will help you figure out your next steps in treatment.

**If the HIV test is negative**, that means no HIV antibodies were found.

- If your last possible exposure was **more** than three months ago, you can feel confident that you are HIV negative.
- If your last possible exposure was **less** than three months ago, you should be tested again once three months has passed. It can take up to three months for enough HIV antibodies to form for the test to detect them.

## How can I live well with HIV?

HIV is not the death sentence that it once was once considered to be. However, there is more to staying healthy with HIV than just taking the prescriptions that your doctor gives you. In September of 2010, the CDC reported HIV was the 9th leading cause of death for all African Americans. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to make sure that you are managing your health well even if you are HIV positive.

### Listed below are some suggestions to help you live well even if you are HIV positive

- See a doctor who specializes in HIV treatment, every three months.
- See your doctor when you are feeling ill. Illnesses like the flu or strep throat can be harder on individuals whose immune systems are weak.
- If prescribed HIV medications, take them every day, ideally at the same time each day.
- Exercise and eat healthy.
- If you drink, do so moderately.
- Do not smoke or use illicit drugs. Substances like crack, cocaine, or methamphetamine can make the immune system even weaker.
- Learn the names of your medications.
- Eat fully cooked foods. Be especially careful when eating seafood, meat, and eggs.
- If you are having a hard time dealing with your diagnosis, consider joining a support group or seeing a counselor. Feeling depressed is a normal reaction to learning that you are HIV positive, but if the depression is severe or lasts a long time, you may need professional help.

## Treatment

If you do test positive for HIV, it does not mean that you have AIDS or will get sick soon. It means that there are HIV antibodies in your body and you need to see a doctor to discuss your treatment options.

While there is no cure or vaccine for HIV, there are medications available to keep your body's immune system strong and to slow the speed at which the HIV reproduces. These medications are called **Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment (HAART)**.

When you and your doctor decide that it is time for you to begin medications for HIV, you will need to be committed to taking them every day. When too many doses are missed, HIV can become resistant to the drugs you are taking.

## What if I cannot afford to pay for my HIV related medications or medical care?

Federal and state funding called Ryan White Assistance is available to help HIV positive individuals access medical care. If you are uninsured or underinsured and meet certain guidelines, you may be eligible for this help.

In order to access these resources, you will need to enter case management at an organization in your area. To find a local AIDS Service Organization near you, call the free **Ohio AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline at 1-800-332-2437**.

All states have AIDS drug assistance programs that can help with the cost of medications. Ohio's is called the Ohio HIV Drug Assistance Program (OHDAP). If you have no prescription coverage or your co-pays are high, you may wish to apply for assistance.

This program is open to individuals who meet the eligibility guidelines including income limitations.

For more information, contact **OHDAP at 1-800-777-4775**.



## Part B HIV/AIDS Service Organizations

If you are HIV positive and are having trouble accessing health care services due to a lack of health insurance or because you have a low level of income, contact your area’s AIDS service organization. You may be eligible to receive special assistance to cover the cost of physician visits, lab work, nutritional supplements and other support services to help you maintain the best health possible.

AIDS Resource Center Ohio Medical Center and Pharmacy can help you manage your HIV specialty and primary care needs. It may also be able to provide assistance if you are having trouble obtaining your medications. Call **614-340-6776** for more information or visit **[www.arcoho.org](http://www.arcoho.org)**.

The Ohio Department of Health HIV Care Services Section can help link you with HIV resources in your community. Whether you need to find a Case Manager or apply for the Ohio HIV Drug Assistance Program, Ohio Department of Health can assist you. <http://www.odh.ohio.gov> | 1-800-777-4775

Region	Agency Name	Contact Information
Akron Area	AIDS Resource Center Ohio	(330) 375–2159
Athens Area	AIDS Resource Center Ohio	(614) 299-2437
Canton Area	Coleman Professional Services	(330) 454–7066
Cincinnati Area	Caracole	(513) 761–1480
Cleveland Area	AIDS Task Force of Greater Cleveland	(216) 621–0766 ext 224
	Metro Health Medical Center	(216) 778–2371
	Proyecto Luz	(216) 651–1128
Columbus Area	AIDS Resource Center Ohio	(614) 299–2437
	Southeast Inc.	(614) 360–0200

Region	Agency Name	Contact Information
Dayton Area	AIDS Resource Center Ohio	(937) 461-2437
Jackson/ Chillicothe Area	AIDS Resource Center Ohio	(740) 331-9200
Lima Area	AIDS Resource Center Ohio	(419) 222-0827
Mansfield Area	AIDS Resource Center Ohio	(419) 525-2437
Newark Area	AIDS Resource Center Ohio	(416) 299-2437
Toledo Area	AIDS Resource Center Ohio	(419) 241-9444
Youngstown Area	Compass Family and Community Services	(330) 782-5664



## Sexual Health Resources

### Websites:

<http://www.blackaids.org>

The Black AIDS Institute provides policy and health information about HIV/AIDS in the African American community.

<http://www.amplifyyourvoice.org/mysistahs.org>

This website offers young women of color information on sexual and reproductive health issues. MySistahs is a project of Advocates for Youth, a national non-profit organization.

<http://www.nmac.org>

National Minority AIDS Council website is dedicated to developing leadership in communities of color to address the changes of HIV/AIDS.

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov>

**1-800-777-4775**

The Ohio Department of Health provides information about the Ryan White Emergency Assistance that is available to help those who are HIV positive and need help accessing medical care or treatment.

### Organizations:

**AIDS Resource Center Ohio Medical Center and Pharmacy**

<http://www.arcoho.org>

**1-888-211-3988**

AIDS Resource Center Ohio offers a one-stop center for HIV treatment in the central Ohio area. HIV specialty care, primary care and pharmacy services are located within a facility that also offers case management, and mental health therapy services. Throughout much of the state, ARC Ohio provides HIV testing, community education and prevention programming case management, behavioral health and housing services to people living with HIV disease.

**Ohio AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline**

**1-800-332-2437**

This statewide hotline can answer questions about AIDS/HIV and STD symptoms, treatment, prevention methods, testing sites, and case management locations. It can also provide referrals as needed to mental health services and alcohol and drug treatment facilities.

## Clinical Trials:

### **State Clinical Trials**

The three clinical trials sites listed below conduct federally-sponsored research studies for the treatment of HIV and AIDS and related illnesses.

**AIDS Clinical Trials Unit at University of Cincinnati**  
(513) 584-6614  
<http://idc.uc.edu>

**AIDS Clinical Trials Unit at Case Western Reserve**  
(216) 844-AIDS  
<http://www.clevelandactu.org>

**AIDS Clinical Trials Unit at The Ohio State University Medical Center**  
(614) 293-8112  
<http://www.internalmedicine.osu.edu/infectiousdiseases/395.cfm>



# Ahead of the Game: Controlling Chronic Conditions

Chronic health conditions are health problems that last for twelve months or longer. They can include conditions like diabetes, heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure) or cancer. The African American community experiences many chronic health conditions at higher rates than most other groups in the United States.

Some of the reasons that rates of chronic health conditions are higher in our community could be genetics (family medical history), higher rates of being overweight or less access to screening tests and treatment. This section will review some of the major health conditions that most often effect African Americans. It will also present ways for you to take charge of your health care.

**Many chronic health conditions share similar risk factors and treatment approaches. Complete the self assessment below to see if you are at risk for chronic health problems.**

- I have an immediate relative (parent, sibling, grandparent) who has:
  - Hypertension
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
- I am more than 20 pounds overweight
- I am over 40 years old
- I drink alcohol frequently
- I smoke cigarettes, pipes, cigars or other substances
- I exercise less than two times a week
- My cholesterol is over 240
- My blood pressure is over 140/90



If two or more statements apply to you, set up an appointment with your doctor to discuss ways for you to stay healthy.

## Diabetes (Sugar)

**Diabetes** (*dahy-uh-bee-teez*) is a metabolism disease that forms when your body cannot use insulin to get energy from food. You may hear it called high or low blood sugar.

Over three million African Americans have diabetes and many are not even aware that they have the condition [1]. The cause of type 2 diabetes is not always clear but there is reason to believe that individuals who are obese or do not get very much exercise, are more likely to have diabetes than people who have a healthy weight and active lifestyle.

Unmanaged diabetes can lead to health problems like kidney failure, heart attack, stroke, amputations, and blindness. If not treated, it can be fatal.

While it is not always possible to prevent diabetes, if you know that you are at risk, you can take steps to stay healthy and prevent the serious complications that diabetes can cause.

**Diabetes can be managed by: eating right, getting exercise, and seeing your doctor regularly.**

### There are three main types of diabetes:

**Type one** diabetes is an autoimmune disease that causes the pancreas to create little or no insulin. People with type one must take daily insulin injections to live. It is usually found in children and young adults and cannot be prevented.

**Type two** diabetes is much more common and is usually found in adults. It can also be found in children but that is less common. With type two diabetes, the pancreas usually creates insulin, but the body is unable to use it in the right way. Sometimes, type two diabetes can be prevented by healthy eating and by having an active lifestyle.

**Gestational** diabetes only occurs in women during pregnancy and can cause complications if not treated.

Source 1: National Diabetes Information Clearing House. 2008. Retrieved <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/DM/PUBS/OVERVIEW/INDEX.HTM>. January 2009. Source 2: HRSA. Office of Minority Health. *Diabetes and African Americans*. Retrieved <http://www.omhrc.gov/templates/content.aspx?lvl=3&lvlID=5&ID=3017>. May 2009.

## Symptom Checklist

Answer the questions below to see if you have symptoms of diabetes.

- Has your vision gotten worse lately?
- Do you get very thirsty often?
- Do you need to urinate often?
- Do you feel very angry, depressed or tired with no explanation?
- Do your hands or feet ever feel numb or do they tingle?
- Do you feel pain in your legs?
- Have you recently lost a lot of weight without trying?
- Have you had a lot of skin or vaginal infections recently?
- Do cuts or sores take a long time to heal?

Talk to your doctor if you checked any of these. It could be a sign that you have diabetes or another illness.

## How to manage your health if you do have diabetes:

### See your doctor regularly.

- Work with your primary care doctor or get a referral to an endocrinologist, a doctor who specializes in metabolism.

### Take your diabetes medications as prescribed.

- Insulin or oral drugs are most effective when taken as your doctor suggests.

### Check your blood sugar level as frequently as your doctor recommends.

- A normal fasting blood sugar range is between 70 to 100 milligrams per deciliter.

### Do not skip meals.

- Aim to eat three to four small meals with healthy snacks in between each day.
- Try to eat at the same time every day.

### Brush and floss your teeth every day.

- Good dental hygiene will prevent infections from entering your body.

### Work out for thirty minutes, several days a week.

- Having a healthy weight can improve and sometimes reverse Type two diabetes.



## Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

**Hypertension** (*hi-per-ten-shun*), also called high blood pressure, can lead to illnesses like heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney failure if untreated. Hypertension is sometimes called the “Silent Killer” because it often has no symptoms. You can look good and feel good but it can still be causing damage to your body.

Out of all racial groups in the United States, hypertension occurs most often in African Americans. In fact, 41 percent of blacks have hypertension, while 27 percent of whites have the diagnosis [1]. There are simple steps listed below that you can take to manage your blood pressure.

### What is hypertension?

Blood pressure is measured by the amount of force that blood creates while pushing against artery walls. Hypertension means that a person’s blood pressure has gotten too high and stays that way. When blood pressure is too high, it can cause damage to blood vessels, the heart, and kidneys.

Blood pressure is figured out using two different numbers– systolic and diastolic. The systolic measurement shows how hard the blood pushes when the heart is pumping and the diastolic measurement shows how hard the blood pushes between heartbeats.

A healthy blood pressure is 120/80 or less.

A high blood pressure reading is 140/90 or more.

### What can I do if I have hypertension?

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit how much salt you eat.
- Exercise regularly.
- Do not smoke.
- Take any blood pressure medication you are prescribed.
- Get your blood pressure checked regularly.



Source 1: WebMd. *Hypertension in African Americans*. 2007. Retrieved June 2009. <http://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/hypertension-in-african-americans?page=3>

## Heart Disease

It is very important to talk about heart disease with your doctor, especially if heart problems run in your family. Too often, heart disease is fatal. In 2005, African American men were 30% more likely to die of heart disease than non-Hispanic white men [1].

The most common risk factors for heart disease are high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, cigarette smoking, being overweight, and physical inactivity.

By eating a healthy diet like the one outlined in Chapter 2 and by adding more activity into your daily routine, you can take huge steps in preventing or managing heart disease.

### What are the symptoms of heart disease?

- Chest pain when you are stressed or after you exercise.
- Edema—swelling in your ankles at the end of the day.
- Getting tired easily from normal activities.
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing.
- Feeling faint or dizzy.
- Heartburn or nausea.

**If you have any of these symptoms see your doctor right away.** Many of these symptoms can also be caused by other health problems so your doctor will need to do some tests to find out what the cause of the symptoms is.

## What is a heart attack?

A heart attack is when a blocked artery prevents blood from entering the heart properly. If not treated quickly, the affected muscles of the heart can die, and will be replaced with scar tissue.

If the heart attack is large enough, so much damage is done to the heart that it can no longer work at all.



Every year, about one million people have heart attacks in the U.S. [1 and 2]. Out of these individuals, about half die, many within the first hour [2].

If someone around you is having a heart attack, the best thing to do is to call 911 and stay calm. Panic can make the victim's heart attack worse, and possibly fatal.

### Warning Signs of a Heart Attack:

- ❑ Uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain in the center of your chest that lasts more than a few minutes.
- ❑ Pain spreading to the shoulders, neck, or arms.
- ❑ Chest discomfort and feeling dizzy, fainting, sweating, nausea, or shortness of breath.
  
- ❑ **Women**—you could experience the warning signs like the ones listed above or you may feel pain in your stomach instead of your chest, dizziness, shortness of breath, weakness, or tiredness.



**CALL 911 RIGHT AWAY IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS**

Source 1: American Heart Association. *Heart Attack and Angina Statistics*. 2009. Retrieved <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4591>. June 2009. Source 2: National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. *Heart Attack*. Retrieved [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/HeartAttack/HeartAttack\\_WhatIs.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/HeartAttack/HeartAttack_WhatIs.html). June 2009.

# Stroke

In the United States, over 5 million people have had strokes. African Americans are two times more likely to have strokes than Caucasians making it is very important for us to review our risk factors with our physicians.

The number one risk factor for a stroke is high blood pressure. One in three African Americans suffers from high blood pressure, putting us at higher risk for having strokes.

## What is a stroke?

A stroke happens when a blood vessel bringing oxygen to part of your brain clogs or bursts. When this happens, the affected part of the brain cannot get the oxygen rich blood that it needs to survive. If brain cells do not get oxygen, the cells die and the functions they normally fulfill, cannot be done.

## What are the warning signs of a stroke?

Signs of a stroke include sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg - especially on one side of the body; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking or loss of balance; or sudden severe headache with no known cause.

If treated quickly, people can recover from strokes with no permanent damage or only minor disabilities.

**If you think someone is having a stroke do this simple test:**

### Act F.A.S.T.

- F**ace Ask the person to smile.  
Does one side of the face droop?
- A**rms Ask the person to raise both arms.  
Does one arm drift downward?
- S**peech Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence.  
Are the words slurred?  
Can they repeat it correctly?
- T**ime If the person shows ANY of these symptoms  
time is important.

**CALL 911 FAST!**



# Cancer

One-half of all men and one third of all women will develop cancer in their lifetimes [1]. There are many different kinds of cancer, each with a range of treatment options, symptoms, and levels of severity.

The types of cancer most frequently seen in African Americans include breast, cervical, colorectal, lung and prostate cancers. Women in our community experience the highest rates of death from breast cancer of any racial or ethnic group.

## What is cancer?

Cancers form when abnormal cells grow out of control. When DNA is damaged, cells are able to grow out of control, forming cancerous tumors or lesions. This damage can be the result of exposure to chemicals, viruses, tobacco smoke, too much sunlight or genetics.

## Are there symptoms of cancer?

Because there are so many types of cancer, there can be many kinds of symptoms. If you see a growth or change in your body, talk to your doctor.

**Take this self assessment to help you figure out if you need to talk to your doctor about cancer. Have you had:**

- Extreme weight loss
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Unusual bleeding
- Unusual discharge
- Ongoing indigestion
- Trouble swallowing
- Changes in a wart or mole
- Chills or fever that do not go away
- A sore throat that does not go away
- A change in bowel or bladder habits
- A cough or hoarseness that does not go away
- A lump or thickening in the breast, or other part of the body



If you have any of these symptoms you should see your doctor. Keep in mind that just because you are experiencing these problems does not mean that you have cancer. There could be many other explanations for why these symptoms are present.

Source 1: American Cancer Society. *Cancer Statistics 2009 Presentation*. Retrieved June 2009. [http://www.cancer.org/docroot/stt/stt\\_0.asp?from=fast](http://www.cancer.org/docroot/stt/stt_0.asp?from=fast).

## Cancer Screenings:

The chart below identifies which cancer screening tests should be done and when they should be done. While screening tests help to catch cancer early, also pay attention to concerning symptoms that develop.

See your doctor if you notice any changes in your body.

Type of Cancer	Screening Recommendations
Breast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self breast exams are suggested for women over 20.</li> <li>• Yearly mammograms are suggested for women over 40.</li> <li>• Breast exams by a doctor are recommended every three years for women in their 20s and 30s and every year for women over 40.</li> <li>• If immediate blood relatives have had breast cancer, mammograms may be needed annually for women even under the age of 40.</li> </ul>
Cervical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All women should begin have cervical exams with a Pap test every year once sexually active or at least by the time they reach 18.</li> </ul>
Colorectal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning at age 50, both men and women should have a screening test. Depending on your risk factors (family history of colorectal cancer, personal history of irritable bowel syndrome), different screenings may be offered.</li> <li>• Colonoscopies, colonographies or fecal tests may be done.</li> </ul>
Endometrial/ Uterine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For women over the age of 35 who have a family history of endometrial/uterine cancer, a yearly biopsy of cells from the uterus is recommended.</li> </ul>
Prostate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearly prostate specific blood tests and a prostate exam should be done beginning at age 45 for all African American men.</li> <li>• If immediate blood relatives have a history of prostate cancer, blood test and exam should be offered starting at 40.</li> </ul>

## Chronic Health Conditions Resources

### Websites:

<http://www.cancer.org>  
**1-800-227-2345**

The American Cancer Society is devoted to providing up-to-date information on all types of cancer. Visit the Web site or call the number above for more information.

<http://www.diabetes.org>

The Diabetes Association's Web site has information managing diabetes. This Web site also has a section that addresses the specific needs of African Americans.

<http://www.nmadiabetesnet.org/index.php>

This portion of the National Medical Association's Web site is dedicated to African American diabetes education information.

<http://www.sistersnetworkinc.org>

Sisters Network Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to increasing local and national attention to the devastating impact that breast cancer has in the African American community. It is the only national African American breast cancer survivorship organization in the United States.

<http://www.strokeassociation.org>  
**1-888-478-7653**

The American Stroke Association offers a large amount of information on strokes including prevention strategies, signs/symptoms and statistics.



# The Rock Bottom Line:

## Substance Use and Abuse

Millions of Americans abuse drugs and alcohol. No race, ethnicity or culture is immune from addiction or the problems that substance abuse can cause. It is estimated that 8.3 percent of people over the age of 12, living in the United States have used an illicit drug in the past month [1].

Addictions like alcoholism are diseases that take time to heal but with the right resources and support, addictions can be overcome. Substance use is an important topic to discuss when talking about health care because so many health problems are caused or affected by smoking, alcohol use or drug use.

### Alcoholism

Alcoholism is a disease that makes your body dependent on alcohol. Even if an alcoholic is aware that the substance use is creating problems in their lives, they are unable to control the drinking.

#### Alcoholism can form as the result of many factors including:

- Drinking to deal with stress, depression or anxiety
- Having a family history of substance addiction
- Being around other people who drink large amounts of alcohol
- Drinking a large amount of alcohol on a regular basis
- Starting to drink at a young age
- Having alcohol easily available

#### The four main symptoms of alcoholism are:

- Cravings– Having a strong need to drink
- Tolerance– Needing to drink more to get the same “high”
- Loss of Control– Being unable to stop drinking once started
- Physical Dependence– Having withdrawal symptoms like nausea or sweating



Source 1: Center for Disease Control and Prevention. *Fast Stats*. Retrieved October 2009. <http://http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/FASTATS/druguse.htm>.

## The Stages of Alcoholism

### Early stage:

- ❑ Increased tolerance- drinking more over time to get the same effect.
- ❑ Repeated promises to quit drinking.

### Middle stage:

- ❑ Mild withdrawal symptoms when not drinking. Could include “the shakes” or hangovers.
- ❑ Lying about drinking or hiding alcohol from friends and family.
- ❑ Trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, or memory loss.
- ❑ Denying there is a problem.

### Late stage:

- ❑ Severe withdrawal symptoms—bad shakes, nausea, delirium.
- ❑ Serious issues with family and work.
- ❑ Malnutrition—very poor diet.
- ❑ Chronic illnesses caused by drinking- cirrhosis, hypertension, heart disease, nerve damage.
- ❑ Emotional or mental problems- shame, guilt, depression.

## Can alcoholism be treated?

Although treatment for alcoholism is not easy, there are a few different ways that the disease can be managed.

Each person has to find the approach that is right for them. Below are some of the treatment options that exist to help an alcoholic stop drinking.

- Counseling
- Medications
- 12 Step programs
- Support groups



## Drug Abuse

Like alcoholism, addiction to other substances is a disease that can be treated. People become dependent on a variety of substances ranging from medications that physicians have prescribed to illegal drugs like cocaine, crystal meth, or heroin.

In 2000, almost 20,000 people in the US died from an illegal drug overdose and 600,000 people went to the hospital for drug abuse problems [1]. Illegal drugs can be especially dangerous because it is very hard to tell what ingredients were used to create them.

Illegal drugs or abused prescription and over the counter drugs, can cause damage to the heart, liver and other internal organs. For instance, cocaine can cause a heart attack in a young and otherwise healthy person.

### **Some of the signs that a person may show if abusing or addicted to drugs:**

- Needle marks on the skin
- Rapid heart rate
- Euphoria (exaggerated state of happiness)
- Dilated pupils
- Anxiety or paranoia
- Hyperactivity
- Slurred speech
- Shorter attention span than usual
- Mood swings
- Aggressive or suicidal behavior



Source 1: American College of Emergency Physicians. *Illegal Drug Use*. Retrieved June 2009. <http://www.acep.org/patients.aspx?id=26004>.

## How can I tell if I have a problem with drinking or substance use?

Take the **CAGE** test to help you decide whether or not you have a substance abuse problem. If you answer yes to any of these, consider seeking out help for a possible addiction.

- C** Have you ever tried to **CUT BACK** on your drinking/using but were unsuccessful?
- A** Do you get **ANNOYED** when family or friends say you drink or use too much?
- G** Do you ever feel **GUILTY** about your drinking or using? Do you feel guilty about behavior caused by your use of drugs or alcohol?
- E** Do you ever drink or use drugs as an **EYE-OPENER** to get your day started?



If you or someone you love has a problem, call the **National Alcohol and Drug Hotline at 1-866-383-4293**. The counselors can help you plan an intervention or help you find the support you need to stay sober. Or contact: [www.addiction.cc](http://www.addiction.cc)

## The Effects of Drugs and Alcohol

It is important for you to tell your doctor about current or past drug and alcohol use because there are several serious conditions that they may be more likely to look out for, if they know your history.

**Cirrhosis** (*si-roh-sis*) causes the tissue of the liver to become scarred. This blocks the flow of blood into the organ and keeps your liver from removing toxins from your body.

Heavy drinking or substance use can cause cirrhosis to form. Men who have more than 3 drinks every day and women who have more than 2 drinks every day are at risk.

**Hepatitis C** (*hep-uh-tahy-tis*) means inflammation of the liver. If the liver is inflamed, it does not work as well as it should. There are several different types of hepatitis but the one most often related to drug and alcohol use is Hepatitis C.

It is spread through sharing needles, having unprotected sex and coming into contact with infected blood. The disease usually progresses slowly so many people do not know that they have it. If the infection goes untreated for too long, the liver can stop working and a transplant may be needed.

**Check the boxes for any symptoms that you have. See your doctor if you experience any for more than a few days.**

- Pain or swelling of the abdomen
- Yellowing of the eyes or skin (jaundice)
- Unusual bruising and bleeding
- Exhaustion
- Weakness
- Gallstones
- Itching
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dark yellow urine
- Weight loss
- Fever



## **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)**

is one of the most common causes of mental retardation in babies. It is estimated that up to 6,000 babies are born each year in the U.S. with FAS [1].

Babies with FAS may have a low birth weight, their organs may not be formed properly, and their brains may not function normally, causing some level of mental delay.

FAS is caused by alcohol being consumed during pregnancy. It is reported that 13% of women drink alcohol while they are pregnant [1].

Some babies experience **Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE)**. This means that the baby has been harmed by the mother's drinking of alcohol, but the results are not as severe as the syndrome.

Babies with FAE could have physical or mental defects and behavioral problems when they become older.



**No amount of alcohol is safe to drink at any time during pregnancy.**

Source 1: Bertrand, J., et al., National Task Force on FAS/FAE. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: Guidelines for Referral and Diagnosis. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 2004.

## Smoking

Over 22% of African Americans smoke some type of tobacco product like cigars, cigarillos or cigarettes [1]. It has been found that half of the individuals who smoke and do not quit will die from a smoking related illness [2]. It is very important to try to quit smoking today because your body will benefit from stopping no matter how long you have been using tobacco products.

Stopping is not easy. When someone tries to quit, there are often physical withdraw symptoms like feeling restless, having problems sleeping, or being anxious and grouchy.

### **If I have been smoking, why should I stop now?**

Besides smelling better, being in charge of your life, looking healthier and feeling more relaxed, the timeline below shows how your body benefits from stopping smoked tobacco use today.

- After 2 to 3 weeks, your circulation is better and your lung function improves making exercise easier.  
(US Surgeon General's Report, 1990, pp. 193, 194, 196, 285, 323)
- After 1 to 9 months, coughing and shortness of breath decrease. Your lungs are cleaner which means there is less of a chance for infection.  
(US Surgeon General's Report, 1990, pp. 285-287, 304)
- After 1 year, the risk of heart disease is half that of a smoker.  
(US Surgeon General's Report, 1990, pp. vi)
- After 10 years, the lung cancer death rate is half that of a smoker. The risk of other cancers like mouth, throat, cervix, bladder and esophagus also decrease.  
(US Surgeon General's Report, 1990, pp. vi, 131, 148, 152, 155, 164, 166)

- Every year, 443,600 premature deaths occur as the direct result of tobacco use [2].
- Smoking causes 87% of lung cancer deaths [2].
- Secondhand smoke kills over 3,400 adults in the US every year [2].
- Smoking almost doubles the chances of a woman having a low birth weight baby [3].

Source 1: American Lung Association. *Trends in Tobacco Use*. July 2008. Retrieved July 2009. [http://www.lungusa.org/atf/cf/%7B7a8d42c2-fcca-4604-8ade-7f5d5e762256%7D/TREND\\_TOBACCO\\_JULY\\_08.PDF](http://www.lungusa.org/atf/cf/%7B7a8d42c2-fcca-4604-8ade-7f5d5e762256%7D/TREND_TOBACCO_JULY_08.PDF). Source 2: American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts and Figures 2009*. Retrieved July 2009. <http://www.cancer.org/downloads/STT/500809web.pdf>. Source 3: March of Dimes. *Smoking During Pregnancy*. April 2008. Retrieved [http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/19695\\_1171.asp](http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/19695_1171.asp)



## What steps can I take to stop smoking?

- Find help and support from your family, friends, and your doctor.
- For expert help, call a counselor at **1-800-Quit Now (1-800-784-8669)**
- Ask your doctor about medications that can help you quit. These medicines can make withdrawal symptoms easier to handle.
- Consider using nicotine patches and gum. Consult your doctor before starting any nicotine treatment.
- Plan activities to keep you very busy when you quit.
- Spend your free time at places where smoking is not allowed like going to the mall, library or movie theater.
- Do not go places like bars or parties that you connect to smoking.
- Learn what tempts you to smoke. Is it having a cup of coffee in the morning or settling down to your favorite TV show at night? Find an alternative to these activities for the next few weeks.

### **START**

**Set** a quit date.

**Tell** your family and friends that you plan to quit.

**Anticipate** and plan for the challenges you will face while quitting.

**Remove** cigarettes from your home, car, and work.

**Talk** to your doctor about getting help to quit.

## The Effects of Smoking

Smoking puts you at a higher risk for developing cancer of the lungs, mouth, throat, bladder, pancreas and uterus. It can also contribute to heart attacks, emphysema, stroke, bronchitis, COPD and ulcers.

Secondhand smoke, either from the burning end of a tobacco product or exhaled by the smoker, is very dangerous too. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at a higher risk for severe asthma, colds, ear infections, pneumonia and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). People who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at a higher risk for developing lung cancer.

If you use tobacco products, it is important to tell your doctor so that they can more closely monitor your health. They may also be able to help you quit.

## COPD-Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

COPD is one disease that is often caused by smoking. It damages the lungs and causes the airways to narrow making it difficult to get air in and out.

COPD often causes **emphysema** (*em-fuh-see-muh*) and **chronic bronchitis** (*brong-kahy-tis*) causing coughing and trouble breathing.



### How can I manage COPD?

- Quit smoking.
- Keep your house clean of smoke, fumes or dust.
- Stay inside when there is a lot of outdoor pollution or dust.
- If you are on medications, take them as prescribed.
- See your doctor at least twice a year.
- Get a flu shot every year and a pneumonia vaccine (and boosters) as needed.
- Learn breathing exercises and get physical exercise regularly.
- Eat healthy foods like lots of fresh fruits and vegetables.

**If your COPD becomes very bad, you may need to call 911.**

**These are signs that you need to call 911 immediately:**

- You have trouble talking or walking.
- Your heart is beating fast or irregularly.
- Your lips or fingernails are gray or blue.
- Your breathing is fast and hard even when you are taking your medication.

## Lung Cancer

Smoking is by far the biggest cause of lung cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, smoking causes 30% of all cancer deaths and 87% of all lung cancer deaths [1]. African American men are 36% (thirty-six percent) more likely than whites to develop lung cancer [2].

Some of the factors creating the health disparity between African Americans and whites could include differences in insurance coverage, working around cancer-causing materials, socioeconomic status, and access to health care.

### Symptoms of lung cancer:

The early stages of lung cancer have almost no symptoms. Often by the time someone notices symptoms it is too late to treat; however, listed below are some signs you should watch out for if you or a loved one smokes.

Complete the symptom checklist below, especially if you are a smoker. See your doctor if you check any of these.

- Wheezing or a cough that does not go away
- Chest pain or shortness of breath
- Coughing up blood
- Feeling tired all the time
- Hoarseness
- Bronchitis or pneumonia that keeps coming back
- Swelling of the neck and face
- Unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite



Healthy  
Lung

Cancerous  
Lung

These symptoms can also be explained by other problems. It is important to see a doctor if you are not feeling well. If you smoke, talk to your doctor about quitting.

Source 1: American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts and Figures 2009*. Retrieved July 2009. <http://www.cancer.org/downloads/STT/500809web.pdf>. Source 2: American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts and Figures for African Americans 2009-2010*. Retrieved June 2009. [http://www.cancer.org/downloads/STT/cffaa\\_2009-2010.pdf](http://www.cancer.org/downloads/STT/cffaa_2009-2010.pdf)

## Substance Use and Abuse Resources

### Websites:

<http://www.aa.org>

This Alcoholics Anonymous Web site provides information on meetings sites in your area. It also provides basic information about alcoholism and treatment options.

<http://www.liverfoundation.org>

**1-800-GO-LIVER**

American Liver Foundation offers information on liver diseases and provides referrals to local Hepatitis C and Cirrhosis support groups.

<http://mentalhealth.ohio.gov>

**1-877-275-6364**

The Ohio Department of Mental Health links consumers to local mental health resources.

<http://www.na.org>

**1-888-GET-HOPE**

Narcotics Anonymous provides information on drug addictions and support that is available to help you.

<http://www.odadas.state.oh.us/public>

**1-800-788-7254**

The Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services offers regional resources in addiction prevention, treatment and recovery services system.

<http://www.lungusa.org>

**1-800-548-8252**

The American Lung Association of Ohio provides information and support for people who wish to quit smoking, and want to learn more information about COPD.

**Ohio Tobacco Quit Line**

**1-800-Quit Now (1-800-784-8669)**

Provides phone counseling and referrals for callers wishing to stop smoking.

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The Ohio Department of Health endorses *Taking Care of Us: An African American's Guide to Healthy Living*, and encourages medical professionals within the community to use the guide with patients.



For more information about AIDS Resource Center Ohio and its efforts to fight HIV/AIDS in the African American community, visit [www.arcoho.org](http://www.arcoho.org).

