

Our Community. Our Health.

Independence 

 The Philadelphia Tribune

The African American community faces urgent health conditions and concerns, including diabetes, heart disease, and issues around maternal health. These exist at alarming rates and impact daily quality of life and longevity. In Philadelphia, the problem is even more urgent, and the pandemic has only made the impact worse. These chronic health conditions and concerns compounded with COVID-19 increase the risk for severe disease and higher rates of mortality.

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.

Here are some facts:

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.
- Managing blood sugar is the key to living well with diabetes. Eating well is an important part of managing blood sugar.
- 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, high cholesterol, and smoking are key risk factors for heart disease.
- 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 made up 43% of births but accounted for 73% of pregnancy-associated deaths.

- Transgenerational trauma and general lack of confidence in the healthcare 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.
- The good news is that most pregnancy-related deaths are preventable. Maintaining a healthy diet, staying active and quitting all substance use can keep a mother healthy before the birth of her child.
- Knowing the maternal warning signs of a potential health issue could save a parent's life, even a year after delivery. If you sense something isn't right, talk to your healthcare provider.