How are African American Men Doing?

General Health
June was Men's Health Month. Here at the African American Behavioral Health Center of Excellence, we want to take the time to:

- bring awareness to the health disparities that African American men face—circumstances that lead to disproportionately higher rates of illness; and
- provide recommendations to eliminate these disparities.

Systemic racism, discrimination, and social and economic inequities are some of the key factors that contribute to serious health disparities affecting Black men (CDC, 2020).

What are some of the disparities?

- African American men are far more likely to suffer from chronic diseases and die from these conditions at a younger age than White men (Xanthos, Treadwell, & Holden, 2010).
- Black men are twice as likely as White men to die from heart disease (Xanthos et al., 2010).
- African American men ages 35-64 are 50% more likely than White men to have high blood pressure and 14 times more likely to develop kidney failure because of hypertension (Xanthos et al., 2010).
- Black men are 60% more likely than White men to die from stroke and 30% more likely to die from heart disease (Xanthos et al., 2010).
- Black men in the United States have the highest rates of prostate cancer in the world (Xanthos et al., 2010).
- Black men are 37% more likely than White men to develop lung cancer (Xanthos et al., 2010).
- African American men have more than 7 times the AIDS rate of White men and are 9 times as likely to die from HIV/AIDS (Xanthos et al., 2010).
- COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and death have also disproportionately affected Black men compared to White men (Ndugga, Pham, Hill, Artiga, Parker, 2021).
- African Americans are 1.1 times more likely to be infected by COVID-19, 2.9 times more likely to be hospitalized, and 1.9 times more likely to die from COVID-19 (Ndugga et al., 2021).
WHAT CAN HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND PRACTITIONERS DO?

- Complete monthly pieces of training to become or continue to grow as culturally competent organizations (CDC, 2020).
- Work with African American communities and healthcare professional organizations to reduce explicit and implicit bias toward Black men in healthcare systems (CDC, 2020).
- Collaborate with physical and behavioral health providers and practitioners to create a comprehensive and coordinated approach to healthcare for African American men (CDC, 2020).
- Learn about the social and economic factors—the social determinants of health—that put Black men at higher risk of physical and behavioral health disparities (CDC, 2020).
- Research and use evidence-based programs and practices to reduce disparities and eliminate barriers to high-quality healthcare for African American men (CDC, 2020).
- Encourage Black men to visit doctors, nurses, and community health centers regularly for routine visits and follow-up appointments (CDC, 2020).
- Be honest and transparent, and encourage African American men to ask questions and express concerns (CDC, 2020).

WHAT CAN GOVERNMENT DO?

- Ensure that healthcare is affordable, attainable, and available to people with lower socioeconomic status, people who are underinsured or uninsured, and residents of poverty-stricken areas (Elder & Gilbert, 2013).
- Become intentional in funding and conducting research that explores evidence-based practices to reduce or eliminate health disparities for Black men (CDC, 2020).
- Collaborate across sectors (e.g., nonprofit, for-profit, philanthropic) to identify and remedy social and environmental factors that contribute to physical and behavioral health disparities, through the formulation and implementation of new and innovative policies (CDC, 2020).
WHAT CAN AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN DO?

- Get Active: Exercise as simple as walking for 15-30 minutes each day can help improve health status.
- Improve your diet: be sure to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Fruits and vegetables help rid the body of cancer-causing free radicals*.
- Know your numbers: Find a healthcare provider you can trust and visit regularly to stay aware of your blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and other indicators that will keep you informed about your health status (CDC, 2020).
- Breathe: Black men face racism and discrimination every day, and that kind of stress can have serious effects on your health. Find time to learn and practice healthy coping skills (such as exercise and slow, deep breathing techniques) to relieve some of that stress. If you need to, explore the possibility of using the services of a behavioral health counselor.

*Free radicals are unstable particles in the body that can damage healthy cells.

