



# African American Health Statistics

The African American community is disproportionately affected by obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer. The *Network for a Healthy California—African American Campaign* was created by the Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Section of the California Department of Public Health to invigorate and engage the African American community in developing programs and strategies for improving this health crisis.

## RISK FACTORS

### Diet

- African American adults, on average, consume only 3.6 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.<sup>1</sup>
- Almost 60 percent of African American adults eat less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.<sup>1</sup>
- The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that adults eat 3½ to 6½ cups of fruits and vegetables, which is more than the previous recommendation of 5 servings (about 2½ cups).

### Motivators and Barriers

- Among African Americans who think they should eat more fruits and vegetables, over 75 percent listed difficulty buying fruits and vegetables at fast food places as the leading barrier to eating more fruits and vegetables. Other barriers were that fruits and vegetables are hard to get at work (64%), hard to buy in restaurants (32%), and too expensive (32%).<sup>1</sup>

### Physical Activity

- Nearly half (48%) of African Americans reported that they did not participate in the recommended levels of physical activity (30 minutes of moderate physical activity, 5 days a week, or 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity, 3 days a week).<sup>2</sup>

- In California, 27 percent of African Americans reported that they did not participate in any leisure time physical activity in the past month.<sup>3</sup>

### Overweight and Obesity

- 40 percent of African American adults in California are obese and 36 percent are overweight.<sup>3</sup>
- In total, 76 percent of African American adults in California are overweight or obese.<sup>3</sup>

## CHRONIC DISEASE

### Heart Disease

- Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) rank as the number 1 killer of African Americans, claiming the lives of 36 percent of the more than 291,000 African Americans who die each year.<sup>4</sup>
- Nearly half of African American adults (non-Hispanic) have CVD. This includes diseases of the heart, stroke, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, congenital heart defects, hardening of the arteries, and other diseases of the circulatory system.<sup>4,5</sup>
- The rate of high blood pressure in African Americans in the United States is among the highest in the world at about 45 percent.<sup>4</sup>

## Cancer

- Among African Americans in the US, 62,780 are expected to die from cancer and 152,900 new cancer cases are estimated to be diagnosed in 2007.<sup>6</sup>
- African Americans are less likely to survive for 5 years after being diagnosed with cancer than whites at all stages of diagnosis. This may be due in part to barriers to the receipt of timely and quality medical care, which results in diagnosis at a later stage when the disease has spread to other tissues.<sup>6</sup>

## Diabetes

- In 2005, approximately 3.2 million or 13 percent of African Americans in the US had diabetes.<sup>7</sup>
- Among African Americans in California, 10 percent reported they had been diagnosed with diabetes, which is 1.7 times the rates of white Californians.<sup>9</sup>
- Compared to whites, African Americans experience higher rates of diabetes complications such as eye disease, kidney failure, and amputations.<sup>8</sup>

## Leading Causes of Death

- Heart disease and cancer are the first and second leading causes of death for African American adults 18 years and older in California<sup>10</sup> and nationally.<sup>11</sup>

- Heart disease and cancer combined to account for half of deaths among African Americans in California<sup>9</sup> and for nearly half (48%) of all deaths among African Americans nationally.<sup>11</sup>
- Diabetes was the fifth leading cause of death among African American adults 18 years and older, accounting for 795 deaths in California<sup>9</sup> and 12,787 deaths nationally.<sup>11</sup>

## FOOD SECURITY

- 38 percent of low-income African Americans in California can't afford to buy enough food.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2006, 151,813 African American households participated in the Food Stamp Program in California.<sup>13</sup>
- In California, 29 percent of African Americans are income-eligible for food stamps.<sup>14</sup>
- Nationally, 30.9 percent of Food Stamp Program participants are African American.<sup>15</sup>



This information is brought to you by the *Network for a Healthy California—African American Campaign*.  
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The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help buy nutritious foods for a better diet. For information on the Food Stamp Program, call 1-888-328-3483.

