

Medical & Child Care News

What Black Americans Need To Know About Heart Disease

(NAPSA)—Black Americans may need to take the latest heart disease research to heart.

More than 40 percent of black adults living in the U.S. have high blood pressure, a risk factor for heart disease. For Black Americans, high blood pressure tends to be more common and more severe—it's a major reason why Black Americans are more likely to suffer from heart failure and die at an earlier age.

Fortunately, there are lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk. The first step is to understand which risk factors affect you and what actions you can take to lower the risk you can control.

For example, the risk is higher for anyone who has a family history of heart disease or diabetes. Increasing age is another risk factor. Women are at a higher risk when they reach 55 or become postmenopausal. Men are at a higher risk when they reach age 45. These are risk factors you cannot control.

Risk factors you can control are diabetes, smoking, blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher, and total cho-



lesterol over 200. If you don't exercise, that's also a risk. Being 30 pounds or more over your recommended weight and having a waist measurement of 40 inches or over for men and 35 inches for women are also risk factors.

"It's important to take action to minimize the risks that you can control, especially if you are a black woman, since nearly half of all black women living in the U.S. have some form of heart disease," said Dr. Mark Jenkins, spokesperson for Close the Gap, an educational initiative sponsored by Boston Scientific. Close the Gap encourages people to be respon-

sible for their heart health by following these tips:

- If you smoke, quit.
 - Aim for a healthy weight.
 - Get moving. Make a commitment to be more physically active. Every day, aim for 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity such as taking a brisk walk, raking, dancing, lightweight lifting, housecleaning or gardening.
 - Eat for heart health. Choose a diet low in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and cholesterol. Include whole grains, vegetables and fruits.
 - Know your numbers. Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure, cholesterol (total, HDL, LDL and triglycerides) and blood glucose. Work with your doctor to improve any numbers that are not normal.
- To learn more about heart disease, visit YourHeartHealth.com and facebook.com/ClosetheGap, twitter.com/YourHeartHealth and youtube.com/YourHeartHealth.

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