

Achieving Healthy Weight in Black Communities: Looking Back & Looking Forward

LOOKING BACK

we consider trends in obesity, and explore reasons for the disproportionately high rates of obesity in Black communities.



As the Sankofa symbolizes, we can look back to learn from the past in order to see how to go forward in the future.

LOOKING FORWARD

we recognize challenges and identify ways to create positive change.

What influences Obesity?

- Over time, changes in the way we live, work, eat and play have contributed to excess weight gain by leading people to consume more calories than they expend.
- Changes in food and physical activity environments that promote excess weight gain have had a greater impact on Black Americans than other groups.
- From a Black community perspective, health equity issues, such as not having equal access to healthy food and physical activity opportunities, can affect weight.

People choose what they eat and what they do, but they also react out of habit to what is available and convenient and what they can afford.

Looking Forward: achieving equity in healthy weight requires a dedicated focus and a commitment to community engagement and participation. Change must happen on multiple levels - individuals, families and communities.



Obesity in Black America: What is the Issue?

- Currently, obesity levels in Black Americans exceed those for White Americans of the same age and gender.
- In recent decades, obesity has become more prevalent and severe in Black women, and the percent obese has risen, sometimes steeply, in Black girls, Black men, and Black boys.
- Levels of obesity sometimes differ by income or education level but increases have been seen across the board.

What is Obesity?

Obesity means having excess body fat and is usually determined by calculating body mass index (BMI), a measure of weight for height. Compared to people with lower weights, obese people are more likely to have health problems like diabetes and high blood pressure. They may also be more likely to have problems with:

- Days lost from work or school
- Performance at work or school
- Social relationships



The African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network (AACORN) is a national network that brings together African American and other interested researchers, researchers-in-training, and community-based research partners to develop innovative, holistic, and sustainable strategies for obesity prevention and control in Black American communities. www.AACORN.org