



Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, and Healthy Weights in Black Communities: KEY MESSAGES

The African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network (AACORN) provides Black communities with trustworthy evidence about ways to improve African American health. The majority of AACORN members and affiliates are researchers who have grown up in U.S. Black communities.

- Our top priority is developing strategies to support healthy eating, physical activity, and healthy weights in Black communities.
- Our researchers include experts in food and nutrition, physical activity and exercise science, weight management and other areas related to community health improvement.
- Our community partners help us to identify and answer relevant research questions and translate the findings to create solutions.
- Our communications are based on the best available public health data and research results relevant to Black communities. They are updated as new evidence emerges.

KEY MESSAGES

✓ **Food, physical activity, and weight issues are critical community health issues**

There is an urgent need to address diet, physical activity, and weight issues that affect the health of children and adults in the U.S. The need is particularly serious in Black communities because the number of people affected is so high.

- Diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and some types of cancer are partly caused or worsened by poor diet, lack of physical activity, and excess body weight.
- Changes in food intake, physical activity, and weight can prevent or help to control these health problems.
- Black adults have especially high rates of these health problems.
- Black Americans report eating and physical activity patterns that do not meet health guidelines
- Height and weight measurements of Black Americans reveal unhealthy weight levels in at least 1 in 4 boys and girls, 1 in 3 men and 1 in every 2 women.

Many Black Americans recognize that size can matter for anyone's health.

- Many Black children and adults have weight-related health problems.
- Many Black parents are concerned about their children's weight.

- Many Black Americans report that they are trying to eat healthier foods, be more active, and lose weight.

✓ What surrounds us “shapes us”

Having easier access to healthy food at good prices makes it easier to buy healthier foods.

- Black shoppers often express frustration with the effort it takes to obtain the types of foods that are recommended for a healthy diet and with the high prices of these foods in neighborhood stores.
- Black shoppers also note high-fat or high-sugar foods are often better bargains than healthier foods.
- Changing the way you eat should not mean giving up good tasting food.
- To promote healthier eating, neighborhoods should have a mix of clean and appealing food stores and other food outlets that offer and promote fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain foods, and other foods recommended in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines.

More safe and affordable ways to be physically active make it more likely that people will be active.

- The amount of physical activity needed to support good health and help control weight is much higher than most people realize.
- Days usually involve long hours of sitting with little moving around.
- To promote physical activity, neighborhoods should have attractive and safe parks, recreation centers, schoolyards, places to walk, and organizations with routines (e.g., physical activity breaks) that promote physical activity.

✓ Communities can improve their food and physical activity landscapes

Some communities are creating more options for healthy eating and physical activity. Many more of these types of efforts are needed.

- Successful community-level change requires the input and support of community members who are inspired to raise their voices to improve conditions for their families and the broader community.
- No community wants to be told what they should change; people have to want change for it to happen and be sustainable.
- Community leaders need support from the community at large for change efforts to work.
- Support for specific changes may depend on how they affect jobs or economic resources.
- Recommendations for change must fit with community members’ beliefs, values, and priorities.
- Anyone, and especially youth, can lead or contribute to positive change.

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