

# Taking Care of Our Hearts Together

in the African American Community



**Heart disease is largely preventable, yet many people will likely develop coronary heart disease, the most common form of it. The disease affects millions, but some groups, such as African Americans, are affected more than others. Together, we can change that. Make heart disease prevention a priority for yourself and those in your community!**

## Why are African Americans at higher risk of heart disease?

As a group, African Americans have high rates of certain risk factors for heart disease, such as physical inactivity, overweight and obesity, smoking, and having uncontrolled high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol. Knowing your risk factors is key to understanding how to prevent heart disease and build a strong and healthy heart.

## What steps can you take to improve your heart health – individually and as a community?

Social support can help a lot. Studies have shown that having positive, close relationships and feeling connected to others has health benefits. Meet up with friends and family and encourage each other to commit to these heart-healthy habits – together:



### Stay Active

Aim for 150 minutes of moderate physical activity weekly. Break it up into manageable chunks, like 30 minutes 5 days a week, or 10 minutes three times a day, 5 days a week. Take a walk after a meal, play a pickup basketball game, join a dance class, or do anything you enjoy that gets your heart pumping.



### Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet

Whether it's a family gathering or your daily meals, fill your plate with vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products. Limit foods that are high in saturated fat, sugars, and salt and sodium, too.



### Track Your Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease. Have your blood pressure checked at each healthcare provider visit and track your numbers using a **blood pressure log**. Ask if you should self-measure your blood pressure at home.

## Risk Factors



About one-third of African American women 18 and older **do not get enough physical activity**.

17%

of African American men 18 and older **smoke**.



Almost 7 in 10 African American men 20 and older are **overweight**.

**Hypertension** (high blood pressure) affects more than



50%

of African American men and women.

## Among African American adults 20 and older:

### Women



13% have diabetes

30% have high cholesterol

### Men



12% have diabetes

28% have high cholesterol



## Manage Stress

Learning how to de-stress will make you happier and your heart healthier. Find ways to relax like watching a movie or practicing yoga to reduce your stress levels. Be sure to get enough good quality sleep.



## Control Your Cholesterol

Have your cholesterol checked by a healthcare provider. Use the [My Heart Health Tracker](#) to keep track of your numbers. Talk to your provider about any changes in your lifestyle that can help or medications you might need.



## Manage Your Diabetes

Having diabetes raises the risk of heart disease. Learn how to [control the ABCs of diabetes](#) and note your progress for each one.



## Stop Smoking

Take steps to [quit smoking](#). Make a list of the reasons to quit, select a quit date, and write a contract that outlines your plan for quitting. Ask your healthcare provider for help.

**Eating a healthy diet** can be easy when you follow the [DASH eating plan](#), a flexible and balanced plan that helps you eat heart-healthy for life. You can still enjoy traditional foods by incorporating healthier alternatives into your favorite dishes. Try this DASH-friendly [Jumpin' Jambalaya recipe](#). For more healthy recipes, visit [NHLBI's Heart-Healthy Eating](#) webpage.



## Jumpin' Jambalaya

**1 lb** boneless, skinless chicken breast

**14 oz** low-fat turkey kielbasa

**Nonstick cooking spray**

**1 medium** celery stalk, chopped

**2 small** onions, chopped

**4 cloves** garlic, chopped

**1 small** bunch green onions, chopped

**1 medium** green bell pepper, chopped

**1 can (14½ oz)** no-salt-added diced tomatoes

**1½ cups** uncooked brown rice

**4 cups** water

**2 cubes** low-sodium chicken bouillon

**1 bay leaf**

**1½ teaspoons** cayenne pepper

**3 tablespoons** finely chopped parsley

1. Cut the chicken breast and kielbasa into 1-inch chunks.
2. Spray a medium-sized pot with nonstick cooking spray. Brown the chicken and kielbasa over medium heat and remove from the pot.
3. Add next 6 ingredients to the same pot and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes.
4. Return the cooked meat to the pot; add the brown rice, water, bouillon, bay leaf, and cayenne pepper. Bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and let simmer for about 50 minutes or until the water is evaporated (instant brown rice will take less time to cook).
5. Stir in parsley and serve warm.

## What are some ways to support each other as you take care of your hearts together?

Join forces with people at home, at work, in your neighborhood, or online to stay motivated and commit to being heart-healthy together. Have conversations about heart health, and encourage each other to know healthy ranges for blood pressure and cholesterol levels and what your numbers are. Set goals for maintaining a healthy weight and share tips and resources to incorporate heart-healthy behaviors into your daily routines. Help your community stay physically active by planning and participating in group activities that promote fitness at schools, churches, and parks. By focusing on heart health as a community, we can motivate and encourage one another to prevent heart disease.

**For more information** on heart disease prevention, visit [www.hearttruth.gov](http://www.hearttruth.gov).

