

The Inequalities of COVID-19 and Black Americans

What's Different? Why should I be concerned?

The North Carolina COVID-19 infection and death rates are almost twice as high in black Americans compared to other ethnic groups. In NC, black Americans represent 36% of the COVID-19 deaths, but only 21% of the NC population. This disparity is seen in other states; for example, in Michigan, black Americans represent 40% of deaths and 14% of the population, and in New York, black people are twice as likely as white people to die from the coronavirus.

What contributes to these high infection and death rates in black Americans?

- Underlying health conditions. Hypertension, diabetes, and obesity, which are tied to COVID-19 complications, disproportionately affect black Americans. Black Americans have a 40% higher rate of hypertension and a 60% higher rate of diabetes compared to white Americans.
- Greater risk of exposure. Black Americans are over-represented in front line and essential job sectors, such as home health care, residential care, food service, transportation, and the postal service, which all carry a greater risk of exposure to the coronavirus.
- Lower incomes and lack of health insurance: 58% of black people are poor or low income, compared to 46% of the total state population. Lower income and lack of health insurance can influence the decisions black Americans make about when to seek health care, at times delaying care until a condition worsens.

What Can I Do?

- Remember the three W's:
 - WEAR – a cloth face covering when around others
 - WASH – wash your hands or use sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) often
 - WAIT – avoid close contact by staying at least 6 feet apart
- If you are over 65 years old, or have underlying health conditions, you should remain home as much as possible. If you must leave home, avoid places where people gather, and infection risks are higher.
- If you have underlying health conditions, like diabetes and hypertension, ensure that those conditions are well-controlled, so that you have the best chance of recovering from coronavirus should you become infected. Do not put off visiting the doctor for routine checks and monitoring.
- If you are contacted by a healthcare professional representing the Health Department because you have been in close contact with another person known to be infected with COVID-19, please cooperate with them. As part of "contact tracing", they will call you to explain about your exposure, ask you questions to see if anyone else may have been exposed, and give you advice on how to prevent spreading the virus to your family and friends. Neither the name of the person who is infected nor those exposed will be disclosed to others. It is important that you cooperate fully with the contact tracer and follow what they tell you to do, such as self-isolate. They may recommend that you get tested for COVID-19.

1. <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard/cases>
2. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/north-carolina-population/>
3. <https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/covid19/86266>
4. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-19-deaths-race-ethnicity-04162020-1.pdf>
5. <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=19>
6. <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=18>
7. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>
8. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>
9. https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpsee_e16.htm
10. https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa2011686?query=featured_coronavirus
11. <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=25>



The COVID-19 Community Task Force (CCTF) is a volunteer organization established to engage the community in responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic and to support and augment the County's efforts. The information shared by the CCTF is not an official communication from Pamlico County, its Health Department or the Pamlico County COVID19 Task Force.