A black and white close-up portrait of a man with a goatee, wearing a light-colored suit jacket, a dark shirt, and a patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is out of focus.

What Every African American Man Should Know About...

Staying informed, in shape, and in charge of his
health and well-being.



All too often, African American men wait too long before talking about their health concerns. They may not see a doctor until serious problems have developed and this makes prevention of disease and treatment of illness difficult. In my 20 years as an emergency room doctor, I saw patient after patient who had become very sick because they did not take care of themselves and did not see a doctor or other healthcare provider as often as they should have.

Did you know that about 40 percent of Michigan's black males do not reach age 65? Most black men live about seven years less than white men, eight years less than black women, and 13 years less than white women. Too many African American men in Michigan are getting seriously ill and dying early because of risky behaviors like not exercising, eating an unhealthy diet, smoking, drinking alcohol, using illegal drugs, having unsafe sex, and not wearing seatbelts. But there is good news. The choices you make can improve your chances of living a longer, healthier life.

One of the most important things you can do is see your doctor or other health care provider regularly, at least once a year. Ask to get screened for conditions that can be cured or treated if they are caught early. If you take medicine, follow the directions. It is also very important to know your numbers. For example, you should know if you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and other health problems like sexually transmitted diseases. You should also know your Body Mass Index (BMI), which tells you if you are overweight and at risk for certain diseases.

Knowing more about your body and how it works can help you develop a healthier lifestyle. This can prevent illness or disease. It is also important to know the diseases and illnesses that are in your family. This does not mean that you will also get those illnesses. But by knowing your family medical history, you and your doctor can work together to put together a plan that may include medications along with lifestyle changes.

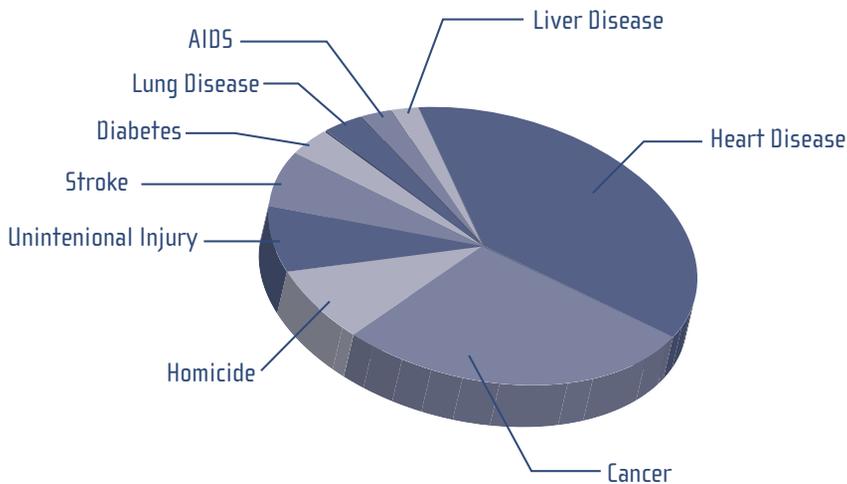
I challenge you to take small steps toward a healthier lifestyle, starting today. Changing your behavior is not easy; neither is sticking to those changes over time. By making just some of the changes suggested in this booklet, you are taking steps toward a healthier, longer life.

Kimberlydawn Wisdom, MD
Michigan Surgeon General

Leading Causes of Death in Black Men

The leading causes of death in black men are: heart disease, cancer, homicide, unintentional injury, stroke, diabetes, lung disease, AIDS and liver disease. Heart disease and cancer deaths account for more than half of all deaths of black men.

Leading Causes of Death in Black Men



Source: 2003 Michigan Resident Death File, Vital Records & Health Data Development Section, Michigan Department of Community Health

“Within each of us lies the power of our consent to health and sickness, to riches and poverty, to freedom and to slavery. It is we who control these, and not another.”

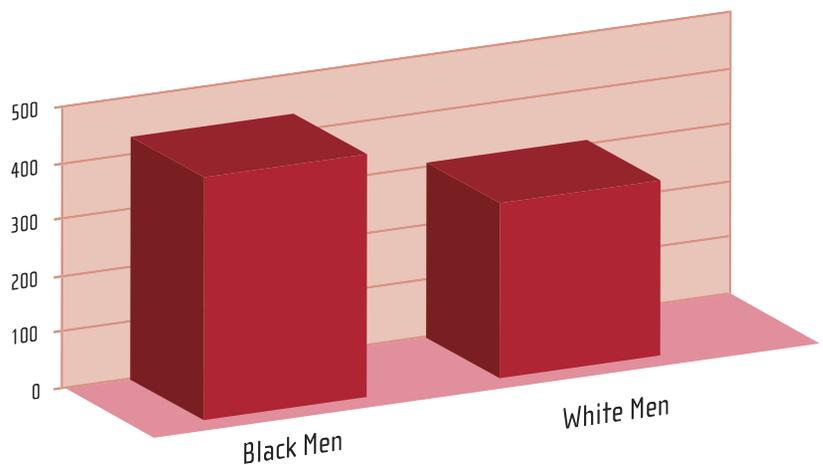
- Richard Bach

Heart Disease

Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for black men in Michigan. Heart disease affects the heart's ability to work normally. It includes a variety of heart conditions. The most common condition is coronary heart disease. In 2002, about 2,000 Michigan black men died due to heart disease. In Michigan black men die of heart disease almost one-and-a-half times more than white men.

Rates of Heart Disease Deaths in Blacks and Whites (2002)*



**Age-adjusted rates in Michigan (per 100,000 population)*

Some symptoms of heart disease are:

- Severe pain or pressure in the chest
- Pain that spreads to shoulders, arms (most commonly on the left side)
- Pain that spreads to neck or lower jaw
- Sweating
- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid heartbeat

If you are having any of these symptoms call your doctor or 911 immediately.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

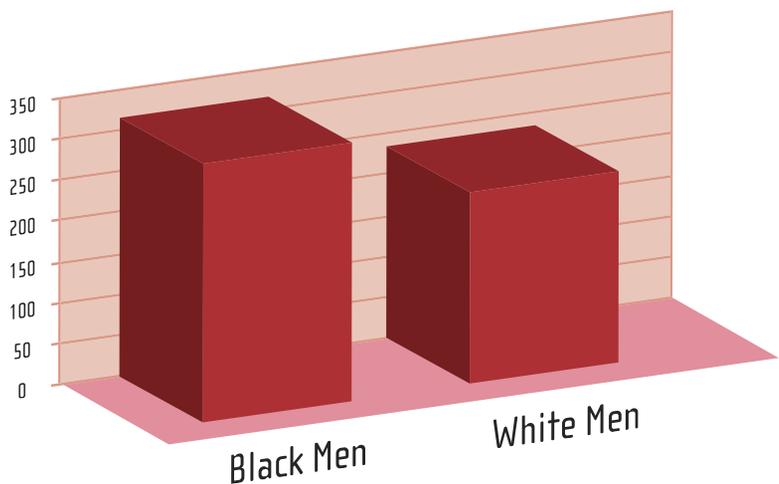
- Stop smoking
- Avoid a lot of salt in your diet
- Eat five or more servings of colorful fruits and vegetables every day
- Exercise regularly (about 30 minutes each day)
- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all
- Have your blood pressure checked at least once a year
- Avoid a high fat diet and eat 'healthier fats' rather than not-so-healthy fats. For example, do not eat trans fats (found in many margarines and some baked goods). Choose lean meats, low fat and fat-free dairy products. Choose chicken, turkey, fish and beans instead of beef, lamb and pork.

Cancer

Cancer

Cancer is a disease in which there is abnormal and uncontrolled growth of cells in a part of the body. In Michigan cancer is the second leading cause of death for black men. In 2002 the total number of black men in Michigan that died of cancer (all types) is 1363. Black men die of cancer almost one-and-a-half times more often than white men.

Rates of Cancer Deaths in Blacks and Whites (2002)*



**Age-adjusted rates in Michigan (per 100,00 population)*

The three major cancers affecting black men are:

Lung cancer: Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among black men in Michigan. More than 400 black men in Michigan died from lung cancer in 2002. Symptoms are: chronic cough, coughing up blood, chest pain, shortness of breath, and recurring pneumonia.

Prostate cancer: In Michigan prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer for black men. In 2002, 170 black men died of prostate cancer in Michigan. Men with a family history of prostate cancer are at highest risk for the disease. Symptoms may include: weak urine flow, difficulty urinating or starting to urinate, pain or burning feeling when urinating, frequent need to urinate especially at night, blood in urine, weight loss and feeling tired.

Colorectal cancer: In Michigan Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer for black men over age 65. Colorectal cancer can be prevented with appropriate routine screening tests. Colorectal cancer is the most curable when detected early, ideally before symptoms appear. Some of the symptoms are: blood in stool, change in bowel habits, stools that are narrower than usual, unexplained weight loss, and feeling tired.

If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor or other health care provider immediately.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Talk to your doctor about prostate cancer screening
- Stop smoking
- Eat a lowfat, high-fiber diet. Choose whole grain bread, rice, pasta, oatmeal, and cereal and other products that are labeled 'whole grain'.
- Eat at least five servings of colorful fruits and vegetables every day
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get a colorectal cancer screening test beginning at age 50 and talk to your doctor about how often you need to be tested after that
- Get a prostate cancer screening test beginning at age 40 and ask your doctor how often you should get tested in the future

Homicide and Unintentional Injury

Homicide

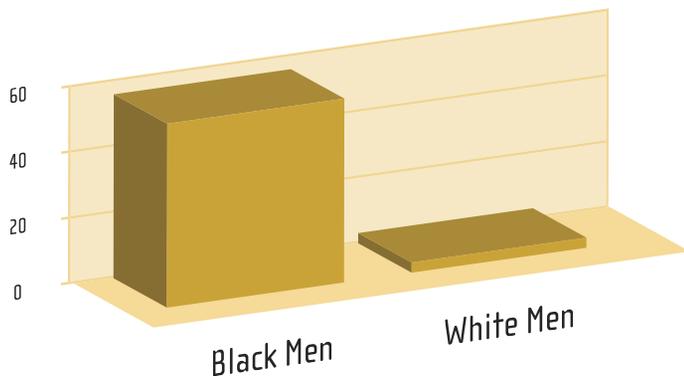
Homicide is the intentional killing of one person by another. It is the third leading cause of death for black men in Michigan. During 2002, almost 400 black men were killed in Michigan. Compared to white men, black men living in Michigan are 17 times more likely to die as a result of homicide. Michigan black men age 15-24 have the highest death rate and are at the greatest risk of dying by gun-related murder.

Homicide is the result of several important issues facing the black community. These include poverty and unemployment; lack of hope for improving one's life; access to guns, alcohol and drugs; witnessing violence and victimization; and mental disease.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Look for opportunities to be a mentor to younger members of your community
- Avoid people who have easy access to guns and other weapons
- Immediately walk away from situations that are likely to turn violent
- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all
- Do not use illegal drugs
- Ask for help if you are having trouble controlling your temper or having other mental or emotional problems

Rates of Homicide Deaths in Blacks and Whites*



**Age-adjusted rates in Michigan (per 100,000 population)*

Unintentional Injury

Unintentional injury deaths are deaths that are a result of accidents. In Michigan it is the fourth leading cause of death for black men of all ages, but it is the number one cause of death for those ages one through fourteen. Black men die as a result of unintentional injury almost one-and-a-half times more than white men in Michigan. In 2002, more than 300 black men died due to unintentional injury. Traffic accidents accounted for almost half of these deaths. Other causes of accidental deaths are drowning, falls, poisoning, fires, and accidental shootings.

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Wear seatbelts and make sure children/grandchildren use a child safety seat that is the right size for their age and weight
- Do not drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Follow the speed limit
- Store all rifles and handguns safely. Install trigger locks and store ammunition separately from guns, preferably in a locked place.
- Safely store household chemicals (*like oil, gas, weed killer and cleaning supplies*) by keeping all products in their original containers. And never remove product labels. Store such items where children cannot get them (*like in a cabinet with a lock or childproof latch*)
- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in your home

Diabetes and Stroke

Diabetes

Diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death for black men in Michigan. Sometimes referred to as “sugar”, diabetes is a chronic disease that is caused by problems with insulin. Diabetes is linked to increased risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and amputation. In 2002, about 200 black men in Michigan died from diabetes and about 600 died of diabetes-related diseases. In Michigan black men died from diabetes or diabetes-related diseases about one-and-a-half times more than white men.

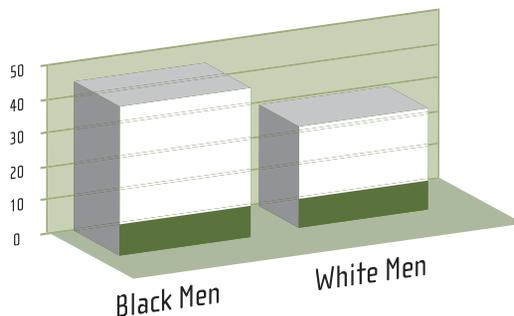
Some symptoms of diabetes are:

- Frequent urination
- Increased hunger and extreme thirst
- Blurred vision
- Weight loss
- Fatigue (feeling tired)
- Weakened immune system (difficulty in fighting off minor infections and illnesses)

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Get tested regularly for diabetes
- Lose weight if you are overweight
- Eat five or more servings of colorful fruits and vegetables every day
- Stop smoking
- Exercise at least 30 minutes every day
- Limit the amount of refined carbohydrates you eat (*including pastries, sweet cereals, soft drinks and foods high in sugar*)

**Rates of Diabetes Deaths
in Blacks and Whites (2002)***



*Age-adjusted rates in Michigan (per 100,00 population)

Stroke

Stroke or “brain attack” occurs when there is a sudden loss of blood supply to the brain. This can be caused by a blocked blood vessel or blood vessels that burst. Stroke can result in permanent disability or death. Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in black men in Michigan and also a major cause of disability. In 2002, more than 300 black men died of stroke in Michigan. Compared to other racial groups living in Michigan, black men are more likely to die of stroke than any other group.

Some symptoms of stroke include:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially if it’s only on one side of the body
- Sudden loss of sight, especially if it’s only on one side
- Sudden loss of speech
- Sudden falls
- Dizziness
- Confusion

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Stop smoking
- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all
- Do not use illegal drugs
- Exercise at least 30 minutes each day
- Eat five or more servings of colorful fruits and vegetables every day
- Follow a low fat diet
- Salt food lightly, if at all, and only after you’ve tasted it
- Maintain a healthy weight



Chronic Lung Disorders and Liver Di

Chronic Lung Disorders

Common chronic lung disorders are chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and asthma. In chronic lung diseases the air sacs in the lungs are destroyed so the lungs cannot hold air. It is the seventh leading cause of death in black men in Michigan. Smoking can cause chronic lung disease. In 2002 about 200 black men died due to chronic lung disease in Michigan.

The symptoms of chronic lung disease are:

- Difficulty breathing
- Coughs that do not go away
- Spitting or coughing mucus
- Wheezing

If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor or other health care provider.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- If you smoke you are ten times more likely to get lung disease. So if you smoke, stop.
- If you use chemicals protect yourself from breathing chemical fumes by wearing a mask or other protection *(for example, at work, in hobbies or while gardening)*



Chronic Liver Disease

Common chronic liver diseases are cirrhosis and hepatitis. Over time, these diseases destroy liver tissue. The most common cause of liver disease is excessive use of alcohol. Alcoholic hepatitis and alcohol-related cirrhosis outnumber all other types of liver disease. Cirrhosis is scarring of the liver. Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver caused by a virus. Hepatitis can be spread by blood and bodily fluids, close contact with someone who has hepatitis, injecting drugs, sharing needles, and unprotected sexual contact. In Michigan chronic liver disease is the 10th leading cause of death in black men. In 2002, there were about 100 deaths among black men due to chronic liver disease in Michigan.

Some symptoms of liver disease are:

- Nausea and weakness
- Stomach pain
- Loss of appetite
- Dark urine
- Yellow skin and eyes
- Weight loss
- Fluid in the abdominal cavity
- Leg swelling

If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor or other health care provider.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all
- Use a latex or polyurethane condom during oral, vaginal or anal sex
- Limit your number of sexual partners
- Do not use illegal drugs
- Do not share needles or injection equipment, such as syringes
- Do not share clippers, tweezers, razors, scissors, toothbrushes or other instruments used in grooming where even a small amount of blood may be present
- Do not share tattoo needles or equipment
- Get vaccinated (shots) against Hepatitis A and B (there is no vaccine for Hepatitis C)

While the blood supply in America is very safe, people may have been exposed to Hepatitis C in the past and did not know it. Risks for Hepatitis C include: receiving a blood transfusion or solid organ transplant before July of 1992; receiving clotting factor (*medicine that helps your blood clot*) before 1987; and being on long-term kidney dialysis. If you think you were exposed to Hepatitis C in the past, talk to your health care provider about your concerns.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS

AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome – is caused by HIV infection. HIV destroys the body's ability to fight infections. HIV can be passed from person-to-person through bodily fluids during sexual contact, or from infected blood, or through sharing needles and other drug equipment.

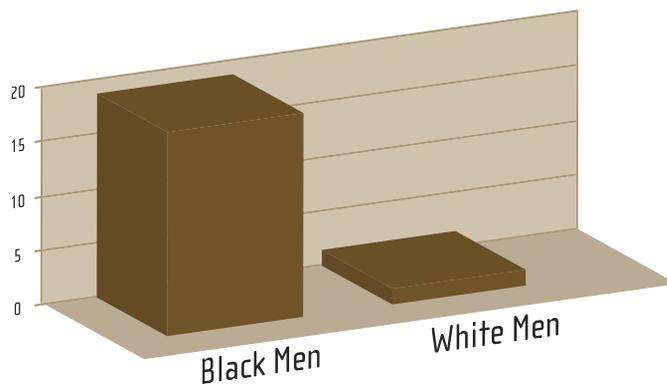
In Michigan HIV/AIDS is the fourth leading cause of death in black men 25-44 years old. In 2002, more than 100 black men died of HIV/AIDS in Michigan. Every year more black men die from HIV/AIDS than white men, in Michigan. About 7,000 Michigan black men are living with HIV/AIDS. In Michigan 50% of the men with HIV or AIDS are black. One out of 100 black men in Michigan may be HIV-infected.

“We are the hope and the dream of the slave and we're not going to die this way”

- Sheryl Lee Ralph

Speaking at the US Conference on AIDS

Rates of HIV/AIDS Deaths in Blacks and Whites (2002)*



**Age-adjusted rates in Michigan (per 100,00 population)*

You may be at risk for HIV if you:

- Have unprotected sex (sex without a condom)
- Have multiple sex partners
- Share needles or syringes
- Become exposed to blood or body fluid of a person who has HIV (or is “HIV-positive”)

Babies born to HIV-positive mothers are also at risk, but there is medication that can greatly reduce the chances of these babies getting HIV.

Some symptoms of HIV/AIDS are:

- Some symptoms of HIV infection (diarrhea, fever, weight loss, loss of appetite, sore throat, sores on the skin or in the mouth, and pneumonia) are common with other illnesses and diseases.
- Many people infected with HIV do not experience symptoms for years.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Get tested for HIV if you have one of the above risk factors
- Get your test results after you are tested
- Use a latex or polyurethane condom during oral, vaginal or anal sex
- Limit your number of sexual partners and talk about HIV status (*theirs and yours*) before sexual activity
- Do not use illegal drugs
- Do not share needles or drug equipment



Contact Information

This publication was created by The Health Disparity Reduction Workgroup, Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH).

For more information about Minority Health and Health Disparity Reduction go to our web site www.michigan.gov/minorityhealth

For more information about living a healthy lifestyle, visit the Michigan Surgeon General's Michigan Steps Up web site at www.michiganstepsup.org or call 1-877-422-4244.

For more information on the health topics covered in this brochure please call: 1-800-353-8227 or visit www.hpclearinghouse.org

Help with quitting smoking is available by calling 1-800-480-7848.

Information about HIV prevention and care is available by calling 1-800-872-AIDS (872-2437).

“Over the years we have made progress by addressing social issues as a community. Now, we need to put that same focus on our health. It is the Michigan Department of Community Health’s priority to provide information to empower African American males in an effort to reduce health disparities to increase longevity and improve quality of life.”

- Kimberlydawn Wisdom, MD
Michigan Surgeon General

*Michigan Department
of Community Health*



Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor
Janet Olszewski, Director