

HOW DO I take action to protect my health?

According to the *Listening to Black Californians* study, **most Black Californians** take good care of their health by getting regular screenings, tracking their blood pressure and cholesterol, and keeping a healthy weight.



4 ways to protect your health every day

- **Eat healthy foods**
 - Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. These nutritious foods can help lower your chance of chronic (long-lasting) diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Try to eat less fast food, salt, and sugar, as these may cause your blood sugar to quickly rise and fall.
- **Get active**
 - Be active for 20-30 minutes a day. Do something you like – a walk, a bike ride, yoga, or even yard work. When you are active, your body and brain make chemicals that help improve your mood and energy.
- **Get enough sleep**
 - Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep per night. Go to bed and wake up around the same time each day. Good sleep can help improve your mood and memory. Lack of sleep can lead to weight gain, and even heart disease and diabetes.
- **Be mindful of unhealthy habits**
 - We all have habits we want to change! Maybe it's smoking, too much alcohol, or too much TV – the first step is being aware of the habit. Then you can work on it or get help. Unhealthy habits can lead to diseases like cancer and liver disease.

5 ways to prevent health problems

- **Schedule regular check-ups with a healthcare provider:** More than 8 in 10 Black Californians (83%) have a regular healthcare provider. Need help finding a provider? Check out “How do I find the right healthcare provider for me?”
- **Stay up-to-date on vaccines:** Vaccines prevent the spread of diseases such as the flu, measles, hepatitis, and COVID-19. Ask your provider which vaccines you need.
- **Get preventive screenings:** Tests like mammograms and colonoscopies find health problems early, when they are easier to treat. Ask your provider which screenings you need and how often.

If you think something is wrong and want a certain test or screening, ask for it. If your provider says no, don't be afraid to ask why. If you're ever unhappy with your provider's answer, ask them to record it in your file and consider getting a second opinion from a different provider.

If you do choose a different provider, consider telling your provider why you are leaving – they may learn something, which can help them better treat patients in the future.

- **Care for your mental health:** 8 in 10 Black Californians put a lot of focus on their mental health. If you don't feel good mentally, it can lead to physical health problems. If you ever feel depressed or anxious, speak up and talk to someone. You don't have to deal with these problems alone!
- **Care for your spiritual health:** More than 2 in 3 Black Californians pray or engage in some other spiritual activity. Yet, it's not common to hear providers talk about spiritual health.

If faith is important to you, it's okay to talk to your provider about it. Remember: your provider is your choice. If you don't think they're taking your spiritual needs seriously, consider finding a new one. Also ask your faith leader if they know of a provider who shares similar values.

Note: Health care providers can include primary care doctors, nurses, social workers, and more.

Resources to help you take action

- CDC: How you can prevent chronic diseases <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/prevent/index.htm>
- California Black Health Network <https://www.cablackhealthnetwork.org/>
- California Black Women's Project: Healing for the mind, body & soul <https://www.cabwhp.org/>
- African American Wellness Project Mental Health Resources <https://aawellnessproject.org/mental-health-resources/>
- Dial 988 for a crisis and suicide lifeline <https://988lifeline.org/>

You can learn more about the *Listening to Black Californians* study at www.chcf.org/program/listening-to-black-californians

This resource was made possible by a grant from the California Health Care Foundation.

Published August 2023