




A Community-Based Walking Program to Promote Physical Activity Among African American Women

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Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a broad term used to describe a range of diseases that involve the heart or blood vessels (American Heart Association [AHA], 2010). Nearly one in three American adults has CVD and 49 percent have at least one of three coronary heart disease risk factors—hypertension, high low-density lipoprotein cholesterol and smoking (AHA, 2010; Fryar, Chen, & Li, 2012).

In the United States, CVD is the leading cause of death among men and women and accounts for one out of three (36 percent) deaths. The prevalence of CVD and associated risk factors such as hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, sedentary lifestyle, obesity and unhealthful dietary habits are increased among older adults, some ethnic minority populations and socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals. Risk for CVD is more prevalent among African American women than white women (AHA, 2010). The lifestyle and habits of African American women play an important role in increasing their chances of developing CVD (see Box 1; National Institutes of Health [NIH], 2009).

Abstract: The death rate from cardiovascular disease (CVD) is substantially higher among African American women than for white women. Physical activity has been linked to decreased risk factors and deaths related to CVD. Despite the health benefits of physical activity, reports show most African American women have low levels of physical activity. Home- or community-based walking interventions are effective strategies to promote increased levels of physical activity among African American women. This article describes the implementation of one such program. DOI: 10.1111/1751-486X.12173

Keywords: African American women's health | cardiovascular disease | health promotion | physical activity | walking

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