



Women's Health Awareness Transforming Communities by Enhancing Women's Health



Obesity and COVID-19: Know the Facts



FALL & WINTER WARNING: COVID-19 cases are on the rise, and it is flu season. Be sure to get a flu shot to protect yourself and others

Introduction

In 2001, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher sounded the alarm on obesity, declaring it had reached epidemic proportions across the nation, affecting every community. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported the [incidence of obesity](#) increased from 30.5% to 42.4% from 1999-2018 and that severe obesity increased from 4.7% to 9.2%.

Why is this important? After three decades of data and research, the American Medical Association (AMA) recognizes obesity as a complex, chronic disease requiring medical intervention. Obesity-related conditions include type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, some types of cancer, and kidney disease.

Studies show that Black women may be at a greater risk for developing health consequences

related to obesity as they have [almost twofold greater risk of developing diabetes and experiencing hypertension at earlier ages](#). Additionally, [research](#) shows that Black women sustain more abdominal fat than Caucasian women, and studies indicate an association between abdominal fat, Type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Studies recently released during the COVID-19 pandemic recognize obesity as an important risk factor for the development of more severe COVID-19 outcomes.

Obesity, its Effects on Minority Communities, and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is continually exposing the under-addressed societal ill of health disparities and health inequity in the U.S. Vulnerable populations, such as Blacks, Hispanics, older adults, and the underserved, are more susceptible to the severe health effects of COVID-19 due to underlying chronic health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and chronic kidney disease (World Health Organization (WHO), CDC). Recent data from [the CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report \(MMWR\)](#), released April 17, 2020, indicated that of all COVID-19 patients hospitalized since March 2020, nearly half (48.3%) were obese. CDC revised its COVID-19-related guidance to include a [body mass index \(BMI\) greater than 30 as a risk factor for severe COVID-19 complications](#).

New Study Describes Potential Link Between Obesity and Severity of COVID-19

A contributing factor to increased severity of COVID-19 in obese individuals could lie in the presence of a specific protein. An [article](#) released in the “Thieme Public Health Emergency Collection: Public Health Emergency COVID-19 Collection,” discussed how COVID-19 disproportionately affects people with endocrine conditions. [Endocrine conditions](#) consist of a range of diseases that occur when a gland that is part of the endocrine system produces too much or too little hormone.

The authors discovered evidence of an association between obesity and increased levels of a protein called **C-reactive protein (CRP)**. [CRP](#) is an acute inflammatory protein that increases at sites of infection or inflammation. It is known as a “clinical marker of inflammation present in the body.” High levels of CRP indicate a high level of inflammation in the body. Other factors that can alter CRP levels in the body are gender, age, smoking status, lipid levels, blood pressure, and weight.

During clinical care, CRP levels are used to monitor the status of COVID-19 patients because higher levels of inflammation are associated with poor patient outcomes. Obese patients with elevated CRP levels may experience more severe complications from the COVID-19 virus.

Knowing Your Obesity Status Is Important

Obesity or overweight are terms that indicate that your body weight is greater than what is considered normal or healthy for a certain height ([National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases](#)). BMI and waist circumference are two measures that tell if you are at a healthy weight, overweight, or have obesity. The greater your BMI, the greater your risk for chronic disease and health complications from obesity. BMI is calculated based on your height measured in inches and your weight measured in pounds. CDC defines the standard weight status or [BMI](#) for adult males and females aged 20 years old and older: below 18.5 as underweight, 18.5-24.9 as normal or healthy weight; 25.0 – 29.9 as overweight; 30.0 and above as obese, with 40 or higher as “severe” obesity.

COVID-19 Precautions for Patients with Endocrine Conditions

- Make sure to keep your diabetes and blood pressure under control.
- Keep a journal of your daily
- Do not skip your daily medication(s).
- Have prescriptions mailed or use the drive-thru window at your

blood pressure and glucose readings.

- Boost your immune system by eating healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Reduce your BMI to help lower your A1C levels. The A1C test — also known as the hemoglobin A1C or HbA1c test— simply measures your average blood sugar levels over the past three months.
- Ask your physician about at-home, mail-in A1C kits.

pharmacy

- Stop smoking and vaping.
- Get your flu shot early this fall and keep your vaccinations up to date.
- Do not skip doctor visits. Check in regularly with your doctor; schedule a telehealth visit if available.
- Stay well-informed and up-to-date on accurate COVID-19 data, findings, and resources.

Follow Social Distancing Practices:

- Stay home, stay away from crowds.
- Wear a face covering in public settings.
- Be cautious about people coming into your home.
- Wear face coverings in your home when having visitors.
- Wash hands frequently or use hand sanitizer when handwashing is not convenient.
- Do not attend largely attended events (no more than 10 people). Use virtual methods to connect with your family members that do not live in your home.



Breaking News: All About Upcoming COVID-19 Vaccines & FDA-Approved Home Test Kit

Pfizer and Moderna Seeking FDA Approval for COVID-19 Vaccine

Pfizer and Moderna Inc., announced vaccines that are potentially highly effective in preventing COVID-19. So far, following the clinical trials, both companies report an effective rate of over 90%. Additionally, they tested for safety and efficacy of the vaccine in a diverse group of individuals including representation from Hispanic, Black, older adult population, and subjects with high-risk chronic diseases.

The vaccines were developed using the same messenger RNA (mRNA) technology. According to [NPR](#), Moderna and Pfizer created a vaccine which relies on mRNA with the code for making the coronavirus spike protein. The coronavirus spike protein is very important in triggering one's immune system to make antibodies against the virus; however, it does not cause infection because the remaining virus is not present. For more information about COVID-19 antibodies, check out the [What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Antibodies](#) health message and other [WHA health messages](#). Information about the COVID-19 vaccines is steadily forthcoming from clinical trials at both Moderna and Pfizer.

What this means for you:

The U.S. may have a COVID-19 vaccine for distribution in December/January for the highest risk groups. Information about the COVID-19 vaccines is steadily forthcoming from clinical trials at both [Moderna](#) and [Pfizer](#).

FDA Has Approved a COVID-19 Home Test Kit.

What you need to know:

1. This is the first COVID-19 diagnostic test kit that can be fully self-administered.
2. Provides rapid results at home.
3. Prescription is required.

For further information:

[Please Click Here](#)

Keep Safety First This Holiday Season!

Be aware: COVID-19 cases in North Carolina and across the U.S are on the rise, and many states are experiencing an all-time high.

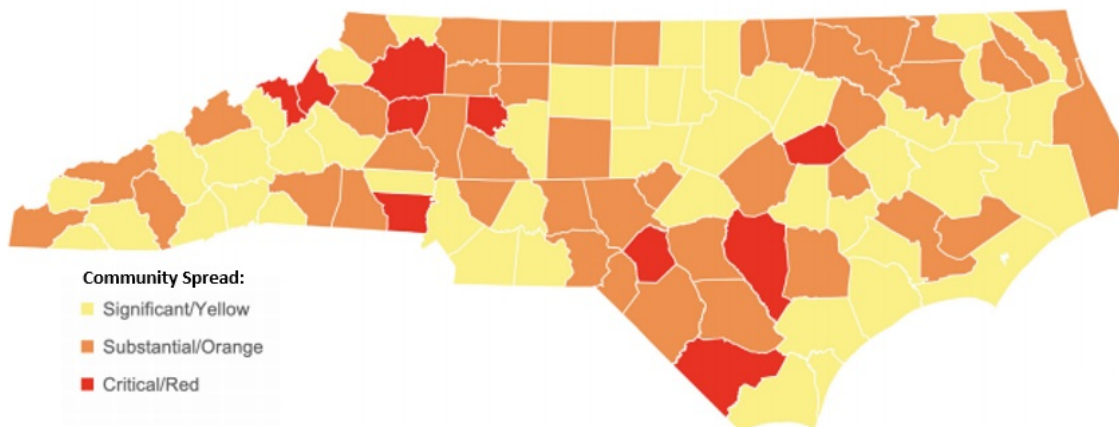
THINK TWICE AND DO WHAT'S RIGHT!

We must work together to get COVID-19 under control this holiday season! Ensure you maintain social distancing policies as recommended by the [CDC](#).

For this holiday season please be aware of the community spread in your home and travel area. Below find unique tools to assess community spread:

- See the North Carolina map of community spread below. The report is updated by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) every four weeks. [Read the full report](#).
- To find the number of new COVID-19 cases [in each state](#), use this [NPR tool](#).
- To determine your individual risk of contracting COVID-19 in largely attended events (10 or more individuals). Use this [COVID-19 Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool](#).

NC Counties by Tier: November 1, 2020 – November 14, 2020



We're Better Together

You Are Not Alone.

Help is available if you or someone you care about is in a crisis and feels

overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety.

For support or help, contact the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) at **800-985-5990**, text **TalkWithUs** to **66746**. TTY **1-800-846-8517**. Or contact the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at **800-273-8255**.

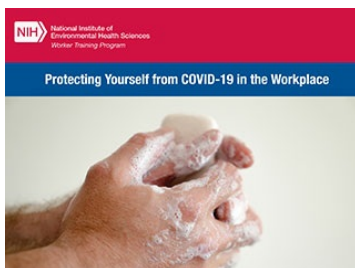
Call 911 if you or others you know want to harm themselves.

A New COVID-19 Crisis: Domestic Violence

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence is on the rise. If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence and needs support, call 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224 for TTY.

If you're unable to speak safely, there is an online chat. You can visit: <https://thehotline.org> or text **LOVEIS** to **22522**.

If you are in a domestic violence crisis, go to a safe place and call 911.



Information for Front-Line Workers

Training is available for essential and frontline workers to protect themselves.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) [has a training website](#) for essential and frontline workers to learn how to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19. Click here for more information: <https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/covid19worker/>

Do you work in the restaurant industry?

Educate yourself about implementing best practices to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in restaurants. Click here for [Reopening Guidance for the Restaurant Industry](#).

Testing Sites for COVID-19 in Durham, Raleigh and across the Triangle

NCDHHS has provided a webpage to help individuals locate COVID-19 community testing events

Community testing events may provide COVID-19 testing at no cost. If you need to be tested for COVID-19, please see the COVID-19 testing sites below. Call ahead as appointments may be required.

COVID 19 TESTING LOCATIONS

This communication was developed by the Office of Human Research Compliance, Clinical Research Branch, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

For additional information or if you have any questions, please contact **whad@niehs.nih.gov** or **919-541-3852**

Lead Sponsor: National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS),
Clinical Research Branch, Office of Human Research Compliance

Co-Sponsors: Durham Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.,
Durham Alumnae Delta House, Inc., and North Carolina Central University
Department of Public Health Education