

GENERAL / HEALTH

U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week is Nov. 18-24



After an experimental antibiotic for a drug-resistant infection in his leg, 57-year-old Durham, North Carolina truck driver George Semakula is learning to walk on his own again.

By Camm Ashford
From Nov. 18-24, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) celebrates U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week. This annual observance raises awareness of the threat of antibiotic resistance and the importance of appropriate antibiotic use.

Improper use and overuse of antibiotics has led to the evolution of stronger and tougher strains of bacteria that are no longer sensitive to standard drug treatments--a sort of “superbacteria” explosion. The result is infectious diseases that are nearly impossible to treat with common antibiotics.

Any time antibiotics or antifungals are used, they can cause side effects and contribute to the development of antimicrobial resistance, one of the most urgent threats to the public’s health.

In May, 2015, the World Health Assembly upgraded antibiotic resistance to an international emergency. WHO described the problem as, “New resistance mechanisms are emerging and spreading globally, threatening our ability to treat common infectious diseases. A growing list of infections--such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, blood poisoning, gonorrhea, and foodborne diseases--are becoming harder, and sometimes impossible, to treat as antibiotics become less effective.”

Antimicrobial resistance happens

when germs, like bacteria and fungi, develop the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them. More than 2.8 million antimicrobial-resistant infections occur in the United States each year, and more than 35,000 people die as a result. Many more die from complications from antimicrobial-resistant infections.

Data have shown that up to 50% of all the antibiotics prescribed for people are potentially unnecessary or not optimally effective as prescribed.

Following these suggestions can help increase your risk from drug-resistant infectious diseases:

* Do not expect or demand antibiotics when you are told by a doctor that you have a viral infection. Antibiotics have no effect on viral infections like COVID-19, colds, influenza and viral bronchitis. Understand that antibiotics must be prescribed appropriately.

* When antibiotics are needed, take them exactly as prescribed for as long as the directions specify. Do not stop taking antibiotics when you start to feel better. Finish the prescription as instructed by your doctor.

* Ask the doctor to give you the most specific antibiotic possible, rather than a broad-spectrum drug. This might mean

waiting a day or so for the results of a culture test, to find out what kind of infection you have.

* If your symptoms do not improve soon after taking antibiotics, see your doctor. This could be a sign that the medication is not working.

* Take only antibiotics prescribed for your own current illness. Do not save antibiotics for later use with other illnesses. Do not share antibiotics with others.

* Reduce the need for antibiotics by decreasing the spread of infections. Stay up to date on all needed immunizations. Make it a habit to wash hands often with soap and warm water.

CDC’s educational effort, Be Antibiotics Aware: Smart Use, Best Care, is the year-round effort to improve antibiotic prescribing and use and combat antimicrobial resistance.

Improving the way healthcare professionals prescribe antibiotics, and the way patients take antibiotics, helps keep patients healthy now, helps fight antimicrobial resistance, and ensures that these life-saving drugs will be available for future generations.

Top Health Concerns Impacting Black Men & Screening Guidelines

Black men continue to endure far worse health statistics than any other racial group. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), Blacks maintain lower life expectancy than Black women, white men, and white women. Similar to all racial groups, the overall life expectancy has increased over the past century, but despite this, Black men are still coming in last place when it comes to taking care of their health. What are some of the reasons for this?

There are several factors that can affect why some don’t follow up on their health, don’t go to the doctor as often as necessary, or are having health issues overall. Lack of economic resources, lack of health insurance, limited access to care, food deserts, poverty, poor health literacy/health education, environmental factors, genetics, and cultural barriers/factors can play huge roles in why some Black men are suffering these poor health statistics at such alarming rates.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the leading causes of death (LCOD) for Black males in the United States as of 2018 are as follows:

Ten Leading Causes of Death (LCOD) in Black Males in the U.S.

1. Heart Disease (24.1% of total deaths)
2. Cancer (19.7% of total deaths)
3. Alzheimer’s Disease (7.9% of total deaths)
4. Stroke (5.0% of total deaths)
5. Homicide (4.5% of total deaths)
6. Diabetes (4.4% of total deaths)
7. Chronic lower respiratory diseases (3.3% of total deaths)
8. Kidney disease (2.7% of total

- deaths)
9. Septicemia (1.7% of total deaths)
10. Hypertension (1.7% of total deaths)

The leading causes of death among Black men shift for different age groups, and you can read more about these here. What can be done to combat some of these leading causes of death? Preventative care needs to be a priority.

Many of these LCOD aren’t necessarily a death sentence if they are prevented before onset or maintained once the individual is aware of the health issue. Oftentimes, people can die from diseases and health issues that are diagnosed too late or aren’t being managed properly.

Regular exercise and healthy food options can help reduce some of the mentioned health risks. Let’s look more closely into a few of these LCOD to see what preventative measures can be taken to reduce these health risks.

Heart Disease

With heart disease being the number one killer in Blacks and stroke also being a LCOD, we must take a look into how we can reduce the incidence rates of these two health issues in Black men.

Regular visits to a medical professional can help reduce the death rates of heart disease. Obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure are also risk factors associated with heart disease. Once identified, these health issues are manageable so that they do not spiral out of control. Checking your blood pressure regularly and monitoring any changes in blood pressure could save your life!

When looking at obesity, healthy food choices can help you dramatically reduce



your weight. Eating more veggies, reduction in red meat, and less consumption of overall calories can help reduce your risk of obesity.

Lastly, diabetes is the third risk factor for heart disease. Understanding your family history, warning signs, and regular visits to a medical professional can help you identify and manage complications related to diabetes. Also, regular exercise can play a role in reducing the risks associated with diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure.

Cancer

When it comes to cancer, Blacks are dying at the highest rate and have the shortest survival in comparison to any other racial group, according to the American Cancer Society. What exactly does this mean?

It means that we are being diagnosed with cancer much later in its progression and because of this, our chances of survival are reduced. The cancers that commonly affect men include skin, prostate, lung, and colon cancers. Prostate cancer affects

Black men at a much higher rate than any other group for unknown reasons.

It is recommended that Black men get tested for prostate cancer as early as 40 years old. Essentially knowing family history and understanding other risk factors associated with cancer can help to identify any cancer in the body early and save a life.

Kidney Failure

African Americans and Blacks also have extremely high rates of kidney disease and this is due to high incidence rates of heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Identifying and being knowledgeable about these risk factors is crucial in preventing and managing kidney disease.

Medical professionals can test a patient’s kidney function, blood sugar, urine protein, and blood pressure to help identify kidney disease according to the National Kidney Foundation.

It is important to take charge of your health. Make sure to see a medical professional regularly and understand your personal family history and the risks that you may have for any disease. In addition to this, create a healthy lifestyle for yourself in order to live a longer life. Remember, health is wealth! (Source: BlackDoctor.org by Darcelle Dieudonne)

Health Scares: When Your Body’s Alarm System Goes Off

I stood there in the middle of my living room stuck in disbelief. Why was the entire right- side of my body numb? All I could think about was my husband and son coming home to find me dead.

According to the American Heart Association, about 2,300 Americans die of cardiovascular disease each day, an average of 1 death every 38 seconds. This claims more lives than all cancers combined. These are some scary numbers but what’s even more significant is the number of people who ignore the signs and symptoms of a stroke or heart attack.

As many as 1 in 3 people have signs of a mini-stroke, but sadly 3 percent of those people take the recommended action. Instead of calling 911 right away, majority of people wait, rest, or take medicine. This of course puts you at higher risk for brain damage and even death. Your body is so unique that it gives off warning signals when there is trouble.

Early one Thursday morning as I was getting prepared for my normal work day, I had an experience that would literally change my life. While I’m blessed to work from home, for some reason I was so drained and tired. I grabbed my tote bag to head out the door despite how tired I was feeling because I had multiple patients to meet.

I was really pushing myself because I knew I had so much work to do. As I walked to the door, I remember being stopped in the middle of my tracks with numbness down

my right side. It started from the top of my head and slowly moved down my face, shoulder, arm, and hand. My lips started to twist, and I literally stood in the middle of the floor stuck. It was almost like I was stuck in time.

As my arm went numb my purse hit the floor, and I stood there thinking, “I know I’m not having a stroke”. I started praying asking God to please keep me and not let me have a stroke and pass out. I never did lose feeling in my legs, so I walked into the bathroom to look in the mirror because my lips felt twisted. When I looked in the mirror my lips drooped slightly on the right.

As I stood there in the mirror and the feeling in my body started to return, I knew I could not ignore these symptoms. I knew that regardless of it only lasting for minutes, I had to get to the emergency room. I also know that time is a major factor in saving your life if you think you’re having a stroke. I have been in the healthcare industry as a registered nurse for almost 13 years and I know the signs and symptoms of a stroke but imagine all the people that don’t, and they ignore how they feel.

Stroke Symptoms

- numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- confusion, trouble speaking, or understanding
- trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- trouble walking, dizziness, loss of

balance or coordination

- severe headache with no known cause

That’s a lot to remember, so the American Heart Association has created a simple acronym, F.A.S.T. That stands for:

- Face drooping
- Arm weakness
- Speech difficulty
- Time to call 911

After being admitted to the hospital for 3 days and receiving a ton of invasive tests, I knew I could no longer ignore those small subtle signals that my body gave me like feeling tired and fatigued. The test didn’t confirm a major stroke, but the hospital did confirm a TIA (transit ischemic attack) better known as a mini-stroke. Our bodies give us warning signs when something is not right. It will alarm you to pay attention and to follow up with your doctor.

Here are several common signals your body will give you that there is something else going on:

Tiredness or fatigue

Fatigue is a very common symptom but it could alert you of an illness. Fatigue has a gradual onset and may not be noticed right away. If you experience constant fatigue, please don’t ignore it. This could be your body giving you a warning sign. Tiredness and fatigue could be a sign of low -blood levels, high blood sugars, and even low iron levels.

Headaches

Headaches are not normal, and if you experience frequent headaches please don’t ignore them. If you are having migraines, this could be a sign of something more. If the headaches are accompanied by nausea and vomiting seek medical attention. Headaches could be a sign of stroke, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, or dehydration.

Blurred Vision

If you suddenly start to experience blurred vision and objects are not clear, it’s time to seek medical attention. Blurred vision could be a sign of high blood pressure, high blood sugar or even a stroke.

Dizziness

Dizziness is not normal and should be investigated further. Dizziness could be the sign of multiple things including fluctuation in blood pressure levels, high blood sugars, stroke, heart attack or low blood levels.

These are just a few signals to pay attention to. Listen to your body because your body tells you when something isn’t right. The body speaks volumes to us, the question being are we listening? Ignoring subtle signs could really be life or death. The quicker you get treated for a heart attack, stroke or any illness for that matter, the greater chance you have for survival. (Source: Priscilla Q. Williams, RN: Author, Speaker, Certified Life Coach, Global Nurse Educator www.priscillaqwilliams.com for BlackDoctor.org)

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in drafting some of the philosophies for the scholarship, suggesting ideas for who the award should be geared toward.

“He helped create some of the criteria,” Lightfoot said. “When I talked to him about this, he was touched

g a m e n t ,
said Brown
was involved

and added to the criteria. He said, ‘Make sure you think about the adult learner. Make sure you think about the veteran student.’

“So he owns some of this process. This isn’t just an award in his honor; this is an award that he helped create. I think that’s what makes this special as well.”

During his time at UTC, Brown was a pillar of the campus community, serving as a member of the execu-

tive leadership team under five chancellors and playing a vital role in the expansion of the campus across McCallie Avenue.

As a result of crossing McCallie, UTC South Campus housing came into existence in the late 1990s, fostering the growth and upward trajectory of the University. (Visit www.chattnewschronicle.com for additional story data)