It’s time to make a change…African Americans continue to rank high with heart disease

July 23, 2011 By Rhonda Peters

Since I can remember, heart attacks, strokes, stints, triple by-pass surgeries, etc. are all words that I’ve heard countless times as a child in my small town in Louisiana. Almost everyone I knew had some sort of surgery related to their heart. Over the years, it seemed as if the number of people I knew with heart disease continued to grow along with poor eating habits. In fact, there was a person who was close to me who had two open heart surgeries and a heart transplant, but still refused to change his eating--he laughed at me and said, “I can’t eat ’rabbit food’ like you.” A year later, he died. This really impacted me greatly and it gave me even more ammunition to finish writing my cookbook to help people learn to cook and eat healthy meals that are low in sodium, sugar and fat.

Being that I’m from Louisiana, I know how hard it is to transition to a healthier lifestyle. It’s almost a sin! Sweet, salty, and fried…is like the basic foundation of all of our family recipes; it’s what makes people smile whenever they say they are going to Louisiana to eat “good food”. Well, enough is enough! Good Food is not good if it will kill you! As African Americans, we must stop this nonsense mentality that I have one life to live so I’m going to eat what I want. Well, enough, your life is not just about you. Everyone has a purpose in life and in order to fulfill that purpose, you must be alive. If you continue to eat foods that are fatal to your health, then your purpose will never be fulfilled, which has more of an impact for generations to follow.

Five facts why African Americans MUST make a lifestyle change[1]!

FACT 1
Cardiovascular Disease (also known as CVD or sometimes called heart disease) is America’s number one killer! In fact, more than 2,200 people die per day with this disease. To break this down further, this is 1 death every 39 seconds!!! This is more than cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, and accidents combined.

FACT 2
Major cause of death for Blacks (non-Hispanics), is cardiovascular disease with men at 44.8% and men at 47.3%

FACT 3

In 2007 the overall death rate for cardiovascular disease was 251.2; black men were at 405.9 and black women at 286.1. Both of these rates are higher than other races (i.e. 294 for white men and 205.7 for white women).

FACT 4

More than 150,000 Americans younger than age 65 died of CVD and almost 33% of all Americans with CVD died before age 75, which is younger than the estimated life expectancy. Of these numbers, CVD caused the death of 47,387 black men and 50,015 black females--that's almost 50%!

FACT 5

Majority heart disease diagnosis is associated directly with diet. In fact, overweight/obesity and physical inactivity were each estimated to be responsible for nearly 1 in 10 deaths.

I hope that these five facts that I have presented to you are enough for you to consider changing your life towards a healthier lifestyle. One that includes making healthier food choices including low salt, low sugar and no frying!

Are you up for the challenge? If you need help or motivation, please post a comment and we can encourage each other!

[1]Veronique Roger, et al. "Heart Disease and Stroke Disease--2011 Update: A Report from the American Heart Association," Circulation 2011, 123: e18 - e209: originally published online December 2010.

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