



Day 7: How Your Race Affects Your Health

You may have heard about the wealth gap, but have you heard about the wealth-health gap?

According to the NY Times 1619 Project, “[racial health disparities are foundational as democracy itself](#)” (39:13). Socioeconomic status and institutional racism lead to disparities across living conditions, limit access to quality health care, and contribute to chronic stress. The factors lead to shorter life spans and a higher likelihood of adverse health outcomes for people living in poverty and people of color.

[Social Determinants of Health](#) are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that shape health. They include economic stability, neighborhood, and physical environment, education, food, community and social context, the healthcare system. Understanding [how social determinants of health influence overall health outcomes](#) is critical to improving health care and reducing health disparities.

Race and income are two factors that can disproportionality impact individuals’ health, but studies illustrate that this is **not** a result of individual choices but rather institutional racism:

- Published in the journal Nature, a recent study found that [millions of Black people have been affected by racial bias in healthcare algorithms used by many U.S. hospitals](#), resulting in Black people being less likely than equally sick white people to be referred to programs.
- A study by the American Bar Association notes that “[the poverty in which Black people disproportionately live cannot account for the fact that Black people are sicker and have shorter life spans than their white complements](#) . . . racial and ethnic minorities receive lower-quality health care than white people—even when insurance status, income, age, and severity of conditions are comparable.”

[Explore the data and learn more](#) about the Capital Region’s Community Health Needs Assessment conducted by the [Healthy Capital District Initiative](#).

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Option 1: Watch [David. R Williams, a public health sociologist, on the TED stage](#) (17:19) discusses why race and deep-rooted systemic racism have such a profound impact on health.

Option 2: Read this article from the CDC regarding [Disparities in Maternal Mortality Rates](#) and visit [BirthNet's site](#) to learn how this local non-profit is eliminating the inequities in birth outcomes for all childbearing people.

Option 3: Hear Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones, explain the social determinants of health through her [analogy of the "cliff of good health"](#) (5:18) in a video collaboration with Urban Institute.

Option 4: Check out this [Fact Sheet from the American Psychological Association](#) exploring the compounding impact of socioeconomic status and race on health.

Option 5: Check out this article [from Civil Eats that addresses how the federal nutrition policies and recommendations are actually insensitive, largely unreachable, and irrelevant](#) in communities of color and major racial, ethnic, and cultural groups, which can largely impact the health and well-being of these groups.

Option 6: [Hear the story of Henrietta Lacks](#) (6:36), an African American woman whose cells were used to test the effects of radiation and poisons, studying the human genome, to learn more about how viruses work and played a crucial role in the development of the polio vaccine.

Questions to Consider for Self-Reflection:

- Reflect on the access to healthcare in your community. Is it easy and affordable to visit the doctors? If not, what barriers prevent people in your community from receiving the healthcare that they need?
- Have you ever struggled to get the health care you needed? What would it be like for you to need healthcare but not receive it?

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