

## **Does Poverty & Racism Raise The Risk of Alzheimer's for African Americans?**

A recent 2017 report from the [Alzheimer's Association International Conference](#) claims stress and poverty can increase African Americans risk for Alzheimers Disease.

According to the [Department of Neurology](#), Emory University School of Medicine, and Emory Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, "the risk of Alzheimer's Disease for African Americans were hypothesized to reflect biological, psychological, and socioeconomic factors." These factors are strongly associated with lack of self-care.

Continuing research suggest," [the recruitment and retention](#) of African Americans for the study of Alzheimer's Disease has been challenging." So statistics may fall short.

### **Alzheimer's & Depression**

Research from the [New York University College of Nursing](#), "have demonstrated a link between perceived discrimination and depression in ethnic minority groups." The outcome of this study however was, "discrimination and depressive symptoms scores were relatively low."

Another study I found interesting was, [the American Journal of Epidemiology](#), cites everyday racism was associated with smoking, alcohol consumption, and high consumption of red meat and fried foods; but experiences of racism were independently associated with higher incidence of obesity among African American women." The catch is, smoking, alcohol abuse, and high consumption of red meat, fried foods and obesity are found in every big city across America.

'Chronic psychosocial stress' is gaining recognition as a major mechanism through which [poverty exerts trauma](#) on both children and adults. Without

any positive interventions, Alzheimer's Disease has less to do with race, and more to do with stress, trauma, and poor nutrition.

[Unemployment and financial](#) insecurity have become features of today's economy! Statistics show each year over [one million American children](#) suffer the divorce and stress of their parents.

Coming full circle, if we include statistics for stress, poverty, divorce and obesity, we'll find it fits 80% of Americans and not just African Americans.

**To prevent Alzheimer's, we must first become aware of the root causes.**

According to the journal of Alzheimer's Disease, Alzheimer's is a metabolic disease in which brain glucose and energy production are impaired.(1)

Young or old, we are exposed to the stressors of life, and stress can negatively change brain cells. Stress increase our risk for insulin resistance by changing [blood glucose levels](#). Insulin resistance as well as diabetes [directly afflicts](#) brain function, linking these to Alzheimer's Disease

If we go with what we do know, Alzheimer's Disease can begin as early as thirty years before it is diagnosed. This means we need to make a conscious effort to take care of our brain as a young adult!

People who are at risk for Alzheimer's Disease are the ones exposed to the most toxins and chemicals, such as cosmetologist, furniture restoration shops, mercury exposure, or toxic auto repair shops. This is because toxins can disrupt memory and brain function.

*As a nation, we need to avoid toxic exposures from the air we breathe, to the water we drink, to the toxins on our skin, to the chemicals we ingest.*

## Fast Track to Alzheimer's Disease

**\*Foods influence behavior.** A poor diet that includes processed meats, fried chicken, hot dogs, sausages, and fast foods contain chemicals such as sugars, nitrites, sulfites, and trans-fats that are associated with increased inflammation, chronic disease, and weight issues. In the US, Americans that aren't health conscious, will eat these foods daily. Eating the Standard American Diet, one can easily move from increased belly fat to estrogen dominance and obesity. Obesity doubles your risk for Alzheimer's Disease. Obesity along with alcohol abuse causes brain atrophy and increases inflammatory cytokines. Inflammatory cytokines are linked to cognitive decline and Alzheimer's Disease. Inflammation not only disrupts our cholesterol, blood sugar and cortisol levels it appears to significantly increase the risk of Alzheimer's, and diabetes.

Diabetes, a vascular disease, compromises blood flow to the brain and increases the risk of Alzheimer's Disease. Blood sugar stability is critical for healthy brain function. *As you can see, a poor diet does not hold a race card.* Sadly enough, an unhealthy gut microbiome from poor quality foods is associated with poor moods, depression, and insomnia.

**\*Depression and poor sleeping habits** decrease cognitive function. These two main overlapping conditions increase our overall health risk for Alzheimer's Disease. Depression doubles the risk factor in women for Alzheimer's Disease and quadruples Alzheimer's Disease in men. In fact, sleep apnea doubles the risk for Alzheimer's Disease for all Americans. Additionally, people with Alzheimer's Disease are commonly deficient in melatonin levels,(2) and melatonin production is low in elderly people with insomnia.(3)

**\*Exercise is critical at any age** for proper cognitive function. Most Americans stop exercising when they get their first desk job. Most Americans develop a sedentary lifestyle with limited sunshine exposure. And most Americans end their day on the sofa watching television. Exercise increases brain activity and decreases stress levels. According to Dr. Daniel Amen, even if you have the E4 gene, you can change the expression of genes with intense aerobic exercise. Studies show those who had

Alzheimer's disease or mild cognitive impairment experienced less gray matter volume reduction over time if they exercised.(4)

Conclusion. One thing's for certain, it's never one habit or one race we can blame for the increase in Alzheimer's Disease. It takes a lifestyle of neglect, stress, inflammation, and poor coping skills to increase disease. And we'll find most Americans are guilty of this, not just African Americans!

Connie Rogers [www.bitesizepieces.net](http://www.bitesizepieces.net)

footnotes:

1- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16340083>

2- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3001215/>

3- <http://patient.info/doctor/pineal-gland-and-circadian-rhythms>

4- <http://www.amenclinics.com/blog/burning-calories-associated-greater-gray-matter-volume-brain-reduced-alzheimers-risk/>