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THE BLACK WOMAN'S GUIDE TO BLACK MEN'S HEALTH

by Andrea King Collier and Willarda V. Edwards, MD, MBA

Warner Wellness Trade Paperback

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"It's challenging to keep our men moving in the right direction in terms of their health. The *Black Woman's Guide to Black Men's Health* is important because it opens the dialogue around keeping them healthy and living longer."

--Deborah Roberts, broadcast journalist and wife of Al Roker, Today show co-host

"It's important that we women support the black men in our lives in being both physically and spiritually healthy. *The Black Woman's Guide to Black Men's Health* will help guide women in taking care of their husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, and friends."

--Donna Richardson, creator of the Sweating in the Spirit fitness program and wife of radio personality, Tom Joyner

THE BLACK WOMAN'S GUIDE TO BLACK MEN'S HEALTH

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Foreword by former U.S. Surgeon General, David Satcher, MD, PhD

Women are the heart of the family, and are the primary decision-makers when it comes to health and health care for those they love. Studies show that men, who have a wife or a woman in their life, are more likely to live longer than men who do not have a support system. Health journalist, Andrea King Collier and physician, Willarda V. Edwards, M.D., MBA, have discussed the role that black women have in improving the health of the men in their lives, in **THE BLACK WOMAN'S GUIDE TO BLACK MEN'S HEALTH** (Warner Wellness Trade Paperback; February 1, 2007; \$13.99).

"I am most proud of the fact that women, some famous, some not famous, openly and honestly discussed the way they have cared for and supported the men they love, in our book. Once the men I know found out that I was collecting these stories for the book, they called in and wrote to share their personal stories too," Collier says.

THE BLACK WOMAN'S GUIDE TO BLACK MEN'S HEALTH includes touching stories from:

- Romance writer, Beverly Jenkins
- Los Angeles health activist, Erin Stennis

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- Health and fitness guru, Donna Richardson Joyner, wife of DJ Tom Joyner
- ABC correspondent, Deborah Roberts, wife of Al Roker

The authors sought tips from the best medical resources in the country who understand the needs of men of color. The guide is focused on improving health through concrete tips that any woman can do to help the man in her life. Readers will learn how to:

- Tackle the issues of heart disease, lung cancer, obesity, diabetes, stroke and mental health issues
- Find the right doctor and building a health team to address their men's needs

Find the right doctor and building a health team to address their men's needs. Create an atmosphere to encourage

There are hundreds of books and magazines articles on ways women can improve their own health, but very little on men's health. Collier says, "If women take an active role in improving health outcomes for their fathers, husbands, sons and friends, they will become even more engaged in their own health. Black women are the heart and soul of our community and its wellbeing."

No matter what their ethnicity or culture, all women face challenges when it comes to getting the men in their lives to be proactive about their health. While **THE BLACK WOMAN'S HEALTH GUIDE TO BLACK MEN'S HEALTH** is targeted to the black community, it is a great resource for any woman who wants to keep the men in their lives around for a long time.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Andrea King Collier has been writing and speaking about health and health policy issues for the past 20 years. Her work has appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *The Lansing State Journal* and the *Post-Tribune*. Her work appears regularly in *Essence*, *More*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Woman's Day*, *O Magazine*, *Real Health*, *Healthy Living*, the *National Medical Association Magazine*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *AARP Magazine*, and others. She is a member of the National Association of Black Journalists and a board member of the American Society of Journalists and Authors.

Willarda V. Edwards, MD, MBA is the President and Chief Operating Officer of Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Inc. and the former national director of the NAACP Health Advocacy Division. She holds a degree in medicine from the University of Maryland Medical School in Baltimore, MD, and a Masters in Business Administration from Loyola College.

THE BLACK WOMAN'S HEALTH GUIDE TO BLACK MEN'S HEALTH Q&A

Q: Why did you write a book on black men's health but focus it to black women?

A: Women, no matter what their ethnicity are the primary decision-makers when it comes to health and health care. We set up the doctor's appointments, we make the household food choices, we pick the pharmacy and we set the health care tone for the family. Studies are showing that men who have a woman in their lives who is actively involved in his health, are living longer and having a better quality of life than those who are not connected in some way to a wife, significant other, daughter, mother, sister or friend.

Q: But why black men specifically?

A: If you look at the statistics from the Centers for Disease Control, the Institutes of Medicine, the National Institutes of Health, you'll see that men of color, specifically men of African decent have a higher mortality rate for almost all the major diseases.

Q: What are the top health concerns for black men?

A: Black men are more likely to die prematurely from heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, prostate cancer, and colorectal cancer than their white counterparts. Our men have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, that can contribute to cardiovascular disease and stroke. And in the epidemic of obesity, our black men and women tend to be more obese or overweight than other ethnic and racial communities, putting them at higher risk for chronic disease.

Q: What was the most surprising thing you discovered in your interviews?

A: Although the fact that our black men suffer disproportionately from the diseases that can cut their lives short was painful to hear over and over again, we went in knowing that. But what was interesting was the fact that women, no matter where they lived in the country, or what their economic status was, they were all struggling with getting their men to seek out health care earlier. Many experts have attributed it solely to insurance issues and access to care in their communities. But we have found that it runs deeper than economics. Helping him manage his health is one of the challenges of being a black woman who loves the men in her life.

The other thing that was wonderfully surprising was the emotion of the stories and the openness of the people we interviewed. People "got it" right away. And everybody had stories. Many of the stories in the book were actually brought to us by a man who knew that a woman in his life had helped save him either through an intervention or through a prevention plan.

Q: Is this a medical reference book?

A: We like to think of it as a love letter to the men in our lives. It has solid health tips from the top physicians in the country. But even as important, it has these wonderful stories of love, support, and determination from women, both famous and not so famous. It is also hopefully the beginning of a new movement of health in communities of color.

Q: So how should women use this book?

A. The temptation is to become so empowered that you overwhelm yourself and your man with your newfound wisdom. This will only frustrate you and him. We suggest that a woman pick one or two areas to work on and go slow. It might be as simple as getting him in for a physical, or getting a nagging cough checked out.

Or it could be to make a decision to cut back on the fried foods you prepare, or to start a folder at home that you keep records of his key health numbers, such as his blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, and the prescriptions he takes. Or it could be something as subtle as buying fewer sugar-laded soft drinks and more water.

The other thing we suggest is that groups of women-women in a family, groups of friends, women in a church group, neighborhood, civic and cultural organizations, develop a game plan based on the book to improve the health of the men in their lives. Women are taking the men's health project on for one year, as a start. It is a very exciting byproduct of the book.

Q: What does this book have to teach the mothers of young black boys?

A: Mothers have the power to impart their values on their children. If you prioritize health in your home, make healthy food choices, teach your children how to shop healthy and eat healthy, turn off the television and get physical, your values about health will have a lifelong impact on them. Just by taking our sons to the doctor regularly and teaching them how to talk to them about their health concerns and questions goes a long way. Our willingness to have open conversation about health and prevention can empower our black boys and girls for generations to come. This book is not just about the fix of the day. The goal is to help black women make a big impact that can be felt 20, 30, 50 years down the line.

Q: You talk about the health of black men, but the numbers show that black women's health isn't much better.

A: You are right. The statistics show that black women as a whole aren't much better at taking care of themselves. They run a close second, and in some cases, like diabetes, beat out black men with high numbers.

Q: What is one of the biggest health threats to the black community that people aren't talking about?

A: There are so many, but it would have to be HIV/AIDS. It is the one subject that we cover in the book that has a direct health impact on our black women. It is a disease that threatens to wipe out our communities. Just look at what is happening in Africa. You don't even have to go to Africa to see it. Black people are approximately 13 percent of the U.S. population, but we are over 50 percent of all HIV/AIDS cases. Black women must learn to take the lead in protecting themselves through condom use and by knowing their HIV / AIDS status and their partner's status through regular testing. People still think that you can look at a person and know if they have HIV/AIDS.

Q: What about women who are not black? Or men who are not black?

A: As we mentioned, women, no matter what their ethnicity all face challenges when it comes to helping the men in their lives manage their health. This book can be a guide for any woman. It would also make a terrific gift.

Ten Tips From:

THE BLACK WOMAN'S GUIDE TO BLACK MEN'S HEALTH

1. Help him find a doctor that he feels comfortable with, and help him schedule regular office visits.
2. Make sure he knows his important health numbers, such as his blood pressure, cholesterol levels, risks of diabetes, etc. Keep a health folder for all test results at home, as well as at your doctor's office.
3. Know as much about family health history as possible. Health history can be an important indicator of health risks. Heart disease, diabetes, and cancers such as colorectal, and prostate cancer can run in families.
4. Encourage him to floss. Good dental hygiene is important for more than just his smile. New research suggests that there is a link between gum disease and cardiovascular disease and even the plaque buildup in the brain that can cause Alzheimer's Disease.
5. Help him make smart diet choices. Make sure he's getting enough fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and cold water fish. Cut back on the sugary sodas, fried foods, and high fat desserts. Also encourage him to drink more water. It's good for the digestive system, and its great for his skin.
6. Get moving ... together. Obesity can affect all aspects of health. A regular and consistent fitness plan can make a big difference, too.
7. Make sunscreen a family habit. Don't forget to encourage him to examine the palms of his hands, soles of his feet and his body for suspicious moles and lesions that could be the beginnings of skin cancer.
8. Help him remember to take his medications as recommended by his health care provider.
9. Help lift the stigma around mental health. Know the warning signs of depression and other mental health issues and encourage him to seek out medical attention.
10. Start young. If we want to have future generations of healthy men, and women, we need to make prevention and open conversation about health a priority in all of our homes.