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Our Mission

* Develop and institutionalize programs addressing the grave disparities in education, health, healthcare, and economic development faced by the African community.

* Defend the human and civil rights of African people.

Healthy Connections

NOVEMBER 2009

Your Neighborhood Affects Your Risk for Diabetes!

The neighborhood people live in might play a role in their risk of developing type 2 diabetes, a study suggests. Researchers found that people who lived in neighborhoods that were more conducive to exercise and healthy eating were less likely to have insulin resistance, a precursor to diabetes.

Insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes are closely associated with obesity, so body weight may be one key reason that neighborhood features were linked to the risk of insulin resistance, according to the researchers.

The investigators hypothesized that people who live in exercise-friendly neighborhoods -- with safe, walkable streets, or near gyms and parks, for instance -- may be more physically active. Similarly, having neighborhood markets that sell high-quality fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods may make it easier for people to eat well. "This study adds to growing evidence that residential neighborhoods can have an influence on health behaviors and morbidity," lead researcher Dr. Amy H. Auchincloss, of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, told Reuters Health.

She noted that the findings also support efforts to design neighborhoods with the goal of promoting good health -- such as requiring residential areas to have sidewalks, creating parks and public "green spaces," and improving public transportation so people rely less on their cars. The study, which is published in the journal *Epidemiology*, included 2,026 adults living in New York City, Baltimore City & County, and Forsyth Co, NC.

The researchers gathered information on a range of health-related factors, including participants' age, weight and family history of diabetes. They then used information from a separate survey of residents in the same neighborhoods to gauge how exercise- and diet-friendly each area was.

Residents were asked, for example, if it was "pleasant" and "easy" to walk in their neighborhood and if there were nearby exercise facilities. They were asked if a large, high-quality selection of fruits, vegetables and low-fat foods was available nearby.

Overall, people living in neighborhoods with many of these resources were 17% less likely to have insulin resistance than those in neighborhoods with the fewest resources.

The findings do not prove that living in an exercise- and diet-friendly neighborhood lowers a person's risk of insulin resistance, according to Auchincloss. Still, she said, the results support the work that some public health departments and non-profit groups are already doing -- such as supporting farmers' markets in low-income, urban areas, and assisting stores in those neighborhoods in improving their selection of healthy foods.

SOURCE: *Epidemiology*, January 2008

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