

Office of Health Equity

Veterans Health Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs



ASIAN AMERICAN VETERANS DISPARITIES FACT SHEET

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INTRODUCTION

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans.

Asian Veterans comprise less than 1% of VA healthcare users. On average, Asian Veterans are much younger than non-Hispanic White Veterans.

HEALTH DISPARITIES

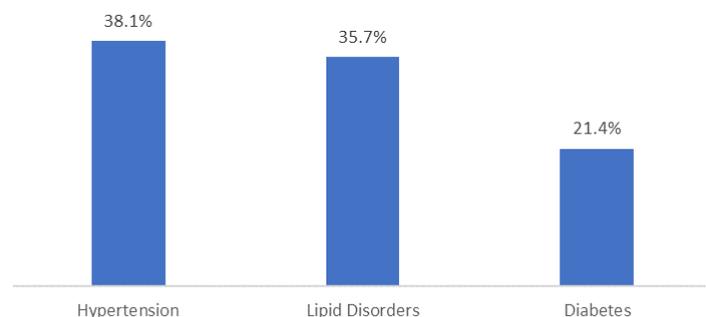
The three most commonly diagnosed conditions in Asian Veterans are high blood pressure (38.1%); abnormal cholesterol levels (35.7%), and diabetes (21.4%). They are also the top three diagnoses for all Veterans receiving care through VA. However, Asian Veterans are 39% less likely to die from any cause of death and 45% less likely to die of heart disease than their non-Hispanic White counterparts.

High blood pressure, diabetes, and abnormal cholesterol levels have risk factors that are lifestyle related and include physical inactivity, unhealthy food choices, and having a high concentration of

visceral fat, dangerous fat located around organs in the abdomen. It is impossible to tell how much visceral fat someone has by looking at them.

Asians are genetically prone to having higher amounts of visceral fat tissue, which increases their risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Health professionals often use body mass index, or BMI ranges to determine if someone might have excess visceral fat and may be at risk for developing diabetes. Asian Americans who have BMI's in the normal weight range (18.5 to 24.9) may have also have too much visceral fat and be at risk for type 2 diabetes. Therefore, Asian Americans, whose BMI is 23 or greater, are encouraged to be followed closely by health professionals and live healthy lifestyles to reduce the risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol levels.

Rates of The Most Commonly Diagnosed Conditions in Asian Veterans



REDUCING DISPARITIES AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO CARE

The Office of Health Equity supports national and local efforts by VA to reduce health disparities among the Asian American community by supporting initiatives like the Healthier Living with Chronic Conditions workshop series in Battle Creek Michigan and the San Francisco VA Health Care System's Strength and Wellness Program to assist Veterans in managing their chronic health conditions.

HEALTHIER LIVING WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS (HLCC)

The Battle Creek VA Medical Center Healthier Living with Chronic Conditions (HLCC) workshop series helps to build Veterans' confidence to self-manage their chronic medical conditions.

HLCC workshop series participants have experienced decreases in pain, health distress, and depression symptoms and an increase in confidence in managing their health, and engagement in more exercise and these outcomes are maintained over a 12-month period.

SAN FRANCISCO VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM'S STRENGTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

"Since becoming a member of the YMCA through the Veterans Program, my health has improved



greatly. With the variety of fitness options from self-paced exercising to group classes, I get to choose what is right for me on a regular basis. Also, an opportunity to speak with a workout coordinator to achieve my goals has been beneficial as well."

San Francisco VA Health Care System's Strength and Wellness Program collaborates with the San Francisco YMCA Association to create a community-based fitness program for Veteran patients. Through this work, the San Francisco VA provides exercise and wellness services to Veterans, bring them back into their community and coach them in a structured, supportive environment where they can meet more people and feel more comfortable engaging in everyday life more confidently.

For more information about the Office of Health Equity visit: <https://www.va.gov/healthequity/>

References

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