

February 2026

# Health Officer Update

Welcome to the February edition of the Health Officers Monthly Newsletter! This month we recognize Black History Month, honoring the remarkable contributions and strength of African Americans throughout history. This month serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of equity, inclusion, and culture in all aspects of public health.

In this issue, you'll find updates on Black History Month events and resources, heart health, and how to care for your health during uncertain times.



## Black History Month

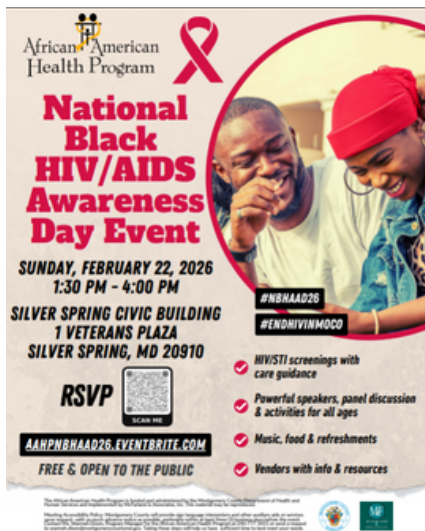
This year marks a century of celebrating Black History Month. In 1925, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, known as the “Father of Black History” introduced the first week-long observance dedicated to celebrating African American achievements and contributions. This year’s theme is *A Century of Black History Commemorations*. As we commemorate this month by honoring the strength and resilience of Black communities, we must also recognize that there is a long journey ahead of us to achieve health equity. Persistent disparities and systemic inequities continue to impact Black communities, reminding us that our work and commitment must endure. To learn more about the health of our communities, you can read the [Health in Montgomery County 2013-2022 Surveillance Report on Population Health](#) released in 2025.

Montgomery County has many events and educational opportunities for all families to unite in celebrating Black History Month. See the list of events below:

Join the African American Health Programs (AAHP) on Sunday, February 22, 2026 for the National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. **Register here: [AAHPNBHAAD26.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/aaHPNBHAAD26)**

Join AAHP on Saturday, February 28, 2026 for a virtual Sickle Cell Warrior Mindfulness Self-Care Series. You can register here: [www.tinyurl.com/SickleCellWarriorMindfulness](https://www.tinyurl.com/SickleCellWarriorMindfulness)





Visit the Josiah Henson Museum and Park on Saturday, February 28, 2026 from 10:00am to 4:00pm for Black History Month Family Day. This event is appropriate for all ages. Visit the Montgomery Parks website to learn more and register: [Black History Month Family Day - Montgomery Parks](#)

The Montgomery County Public Libraries has a page dedicated to Black History Month where you can check out library events dedicated to Black History Month across all libraries in the county, African American Heritage digital resource, and eBooks and Audiobooks of authors and characters from Africa and the African diaspora. Visit the MCPL website to learn more about these resources: [Black History Month - Montgomery County Public Libraries \(MCPL\) - Montgomery County, Maryland](#)

## American Heart Month

February is American Heart Month. Data from 2021-2023 shows that heart disease is the number one leading cause of death in Montgomery County ([Chronic Disease Report](#)). To learn more about chronic diseases in Montgomery County, you can view the 2010-2023 Montgomery County Chronic Disease Report.

Figure 1. Heart Disease Deaths by Sex, Montgomery County, 2021-2023

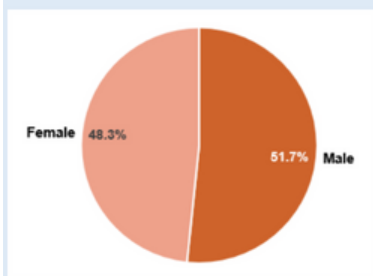


Figure 2. Heart Disease Deaths by Race/Ethnicity, Montgomery County, 2021-23

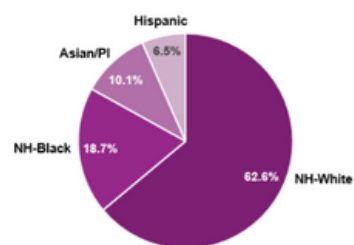
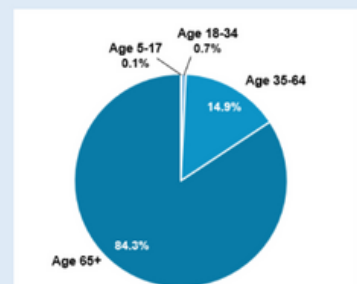


Figure 3. Heart Disease Deaths by Age, Montgomery County, 2021-2023



Below are some resources that are available through the county to ensure heart health:

- Black Physicians & Healthcare Network: <https://www.bphnetwork.org/>
- Learn hands-only CPR through the Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcfrs-info/tips/citizens/Hands-Only-CPR.html>
- Montgomery County Recreation offers free fitness passes which gives free access to fully-equipped fitness rooms, open gym drop-ins and game rooms. To learn more how to access the free fitness passes, you can visit their website: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec/memberships/centerpasses.html>

Platelets are tiny cells in your blood that help stop bleeding. They're especially important for people having heart surgery or dealing with heart problems. The tricky part? Platelets only last 5 to 7 days, so hospitals always need fresh donations. During American Heart Month, giving platelets is a powerful way to help save lives right here in our community.

## **Prioritizing our Health and Well-Being**

There's a lot happening in our communities that can lead to fatigue, exhaustion and feelings of uncertainty. We understand that this is a stressful time and creating a lot of fear. We want to reassure our Montgomery County residents that everyone has the right to receive health care, no matter your immigration status. You cannot be denied medical care because you don't have identification and you are not required to share your immigration information when enrolling someone else, such as your child, for insurance. You can find additional information on the [National Immigration Law Center website](#).

Last year, Maryland passed SB 828, the "Protecting Sensitive Locations Act", which ensures that immigration authorities cannot take action at places like schools, public libraries, state-run healthcare facilities, and any other locations that offer state funded health services.

Additionally, many factors can affect us in different ways, here are some strategies to help you stay grounded and prioritize your health and well-being:

### **Maintain self-care**

Self-care isn't selfish, it's essential for sustainability. Stick to practices that work for you, especially during stressful times like listening to your favorite music, cook or eat something that brings comfort, take a walk at one of our many beautiful [Montgomery County trails](#). Joy is not a distraction, it's to stay emotionally strong. Write down one thing that brought you joy throughout the day.

### **Setting boundaries**

There are ways to stay informed while also protecting your mental health. Avoid excessive information consumption before bed and doomscrolling on social media. Identify reliable sources to minimize misinformation.

### **Create mini routines**

Small, predictable routines can provide a sense of control and calm. Examples include: stretch for 5 minutes while you wait for your coffee or tea to brew in the morning or no screens 30 minutes before bed.

Creating consistent routines, even in small amount, can build emotional safety.

### **Stay Connected with your support network**

Social connection is a powerful buffer against stress. Reach out to friends, family, or community groups. Share your experiences, offer support, and lean on those who you feel safe and care for around you. Staying connected reminds us we're not alone.