
4 things the Black population needs to know about COVID-19

(SACRAMENTO) COVID-19 has disproportionately affected the Black population in the U.S. throughout the pandemic, leading to [more infections, hospitalizations and deaths](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html) compared to the white population.

Pediatrician [Michael Lucien](https://health.ucdavis.edu/team/search/17/michael-lucien---pediatrics-sacramento), associate medical director of the UC Davis Health Community Physicians Group, recently participated in a [webinar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wL-THlcrqjo) to address the effects of COVID-19 on the Black community. The webinar was part of the Institute for Diversity, Equity and Advancement (IDEA)'s Parenting in the Pandemic Initiative webinar series. He answered questions from the public, and these are his top four takeaways:

1. Misinformation continues to affect Black populations

Lucien acknowledged that many Black people have low confidence in COVID-19 vaccines, due to historical unethical practices in medical research (for example, the [Tuskegee experiments](https://www.cdc.gov/tuskegee/timeline.htm)). However, he shared statistics to illustrate that because vaccination rates are low in Black populations, the impacts of the virus have been more severe:

- Black people are more likely to [test positive](https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/covid-19-racial-disparities-testing-infection-hospitalization-death-analysis-epic-patient-data/) for COVID.
- Black people are also more likely to be [hospitalized](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/racial-ethnic-disparities/disparities-hospitalization.html) for COVID.
- Black children are more likely to be [hospitalized](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/racial-ethnic-disparities/disparities-hospitalization.html) due to COVID-19. They have [higher rates of multisystem inflammatory syndrome](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2780861), or MIS-C, a life-threatening complication of COVID.
- Black people accounted for [14% of COVID deaths](https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/covid-19-cases-and-deaths-by-race-ethnicity-current-data-and-changes-over-time/), despite making up only 12% of the U.S. population.

2. Social determinants of health influence who gets COVID-19 and how they fare

"It's not that Black people genetically have a higher risk of getting COVID-19. It's about the social determinants of health. Blacks often have higher risk factors that make them more susceptible to this disease," Lucien said.

Social determinants of health [include:](https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/about.html)

- Your income and your job (front-line, essential workers have been most affected by the pandemic)
- Your access to health care and vaccines (those who lack health insurance are disadvantaged when they need treatment for COVID-19)
- Your housing situation (those in multigenerational housing or shared housing are at higher risk of spreading COVID than single family households)



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— Michael Lucien

3. Many Black people are still not getting the COVID-19 vaccine

"All you need to do is look at the numbers. You'll see that when Black people get COVID, they have worse outcomes because many are not vaccinated," Lucien said. Unvaccinated people are being hospitalized and are [dying in greater numbers](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7104e2.htm) [<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7104e2.htm>](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7104e2.htm) than those who are vaccinated and have received the COVID booster.

The COVID-19 vaccine protects people from hospitalization and death. Without vaccines, people are at higher risk for complications. "Getting the vaccine is like wearing a seat belt in the car. It provides that added protection," Lucien said.

Someone on the webinar asked whether those with preexisting heart conditions should still take the vaccine.

Lucien clarified that while the COVID-19 vaccines have been linked to a small risk for myocarditis, an inflammatory condition of the heart muscle, studies have found that [heart risks are actually lower with the vaccine](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-14/heart-risk-from-vaccines-is-lower-than-with-covid-study-shows) [<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-14/heart-risk-from-vaccines-is-lower-than-with-covid-study-shows>](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-14/heart-risk-from-vaccines-is-lower-than-with-covid-study-shows) than when contracting the COVID-19 infection. Those who get COVID-19 are at higher risk of [heart attack](https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/covid-19-diagnosis-raises-risk-of-heart-attack-stroke#:~:text=In%20the%20week%20after%20a,for%20at%20least%20a%20month.) [<https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/covid-19-diagnosis-raises-risk-of-heart-attack-stroke#:~:text=In%20the%20week%20after%20a,for%20at%20least%20a%20month.>](https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/covid-19-diagnosis-raises-risk-of-heart-attack-stroke#:~:text=In%20the%20week%20after%20a,for%20at%20least%20a%20month.) and stroke.

4. Wear a mask to help stop the spread of COVID in the community

Lucien encouraged everyone to wear masks often. That includes when visiting relatives and friends indoors, while in large group settings and when doing activities outside the home. Even if you are vaccinated, masking is an important tool to stop the spread of COVID-19.

One member from the public asked, "How do we keep our elders safe?" Lucien said that if you visit your elders, wear a mask during the time that you are with them.

"We have all lost someone to this pandemic. The last thing you want to do is expose somebody to COVID, who ultimately will not survive," Lucien said. "We all need to do our part."

Related links

[UC Davis Diversity, Equity and Inclusion <https://diversity.ucdavis.edu/>](https://diversity.ucdavis.edu/)

[UC Davis Parenting in a Pandemic Initiative webinars <https://idea.ucdavis.edu/dei-hdt-parenting-pandemic-initiative>](https://idea.ucdavis.edu/dei-hdt-parenting-pandemic-initiative)

[Sacramento Area Youth Speaks <https://www.says.ucdavis.edu/>](https://www.says.ucdavis.edu/)

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When to contact your provider

If you have serious symptoms of illness, **contact your primary care provider.** UC Davis Health patients can use the [MyUCDavisHealth </login>](#) symptom tracker to evaluate whether to seek help. [Telehealth video visits </medicalcenter/myucdavishealth/video-visits.html>](#) and [Express Care </myucdavishealth/express-care/>](#) are also available.

If you have a medical emergency, call 911 and notify them of your COVID-19 symptoms.



Ways to seek treatment

If you test positive for COVID-19 at home, you can contact your primary care provider about a prescription for Paxlovid.

Patients who receive primary care or specialty care from UC Davis Health can [schedule a telehealth video visit with Express Care </medicalcenter/myucdavishealth/telehealth-express-care.html>](#).

[Learn more about the latest treatment recommendations </coronavirus-treatment-recommendations/>](#)



Visitor Policies

To help limit spread of COVID-19, we have policies for visits to our hospital and outpatient clinics.

[UC Davis Medical Center visitor policy </medicalcenter/visitor-policy/>](#)

[Outpatient clinic policy for caregivers </diagnostic-outpatient-clinic-policy-for-caregivers/>](#)

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