Racism May Seriously Hurt Your Heart and Kidney Health

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We all know that racial prejudice and bias can wreak havoc on our mental well-being, but a new study based out of Baltimore is taking that a step further. Findings suggest that discrimination can also seriously affect our heart and kidney health, Time.com reports.

For the study, part of Life Span's "Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity" project, scientists took a look at the overall vitality of 1,574 Baltimore residents. Among the respondents, 20 percent said they felt racially discriminated against "a lot."

This group also ended up having both higher systolic blood pressure and a greater decline in kidney function over time than people who said they didn't experience much racism.

The trend remained constant after scientists adjusted their results for race, age and lifestyle factors. The correlation was especially strong among African-American women.

"Psychosocial stressors could potentially have an effect on kidney function decline through a number of hormonal pathways," said Deidra C. Crews, MD, assistant professor of medicine and chair of the Diversity Council at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

That's because stress hormones can often lead to an increase in blood pressure, one of the leading causes of kidney disease.

This isn't the first time study findings linked perceived racism with trauma and mental distress. A 2011 study linked discrimination to higher rates of hypertension and a 2010 study linked racism to depression among black and Latino children.

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