

Cultural Project: African American and Maternity

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According to the United States Census Bureau, approximately 4.0% of African Americans are in Coles County as of July 2021. Many African Americans practice Christianity, whether Baptist, Protestant, or branching off to Jehovah's Witness'. While receiving care, Christians may be seen by either a male or female provider, and they have no other beliefs that should affect their care. Many mothers will pray over the birthing process, asking God for protection and safety. Though many Christian African Americans have no religious beliefs against health care practices, Black Jehovahs are forbidden to abort, receive artificial semen, and receive blood products (Swihart *et al.*, 2021). Besides the medical differences between black Christians and Jehovahs, black women feel unsafe during routine pregnancy checkups due to high maternal mortality in the black community. According to Healthline, "black women are dying at roughly three times the rate of white women in birth-related deaths... over 30 are 4 to 5 times more likely" (Healthline, 2020). Studies have shown that people believe that African Americans have a lower threshold for pain. A study showed that about 61% of Hispanics and blacks are likely to report a higher pain scale postpartum but will receive fewer morphine milligram equivalents than white women (Rapaport, 2019). After birth, some Christians believe in baptisms of infants optimally; it is an individual's choice (Swihart *et al.*, 2021). Whereas Jehovahs do not believe in infant baptism. The typical family structure of African Americans tends to have extended solid family relationships, meaning they are close to members outside of their household. Typically, the head of the home is the mother, and elderly family members are highly valued and respected (Ricci *et al.*, 2021). Women are allowed to speak to strangers, whether male or female. African Americans view food as a symbol of health and wealth (Ricci *et al.*, 2021). Christians have no food restrictions, but Jehovahs can not eat meat or any food containing blood products, and the meat must be drained appropriately (Swihart *et al.*, 2021).

Jehovah's specialized diet can impact their stay because the hospital may not correctly drain blood the way they require. When caring for black patients during labor, we need to make them feel safe and supported. This can be done by encouraging black patients to look into doula care, as doulas can advocate in the delivery room and provide additional support. A case study showed that when minority women were provided with a doula or midwife, they had zero infant and maternal deaths, and 89 percent were able to initiate breastfeeding (*Healthline*, 2020). As part of the health care team, we should continually check in with the patient to advocate and ensure their past medical history will cause no problems in the future to provide a safe pregnancy for both the mom and the baby.

Reference

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