



KSC FITNESS CENTER

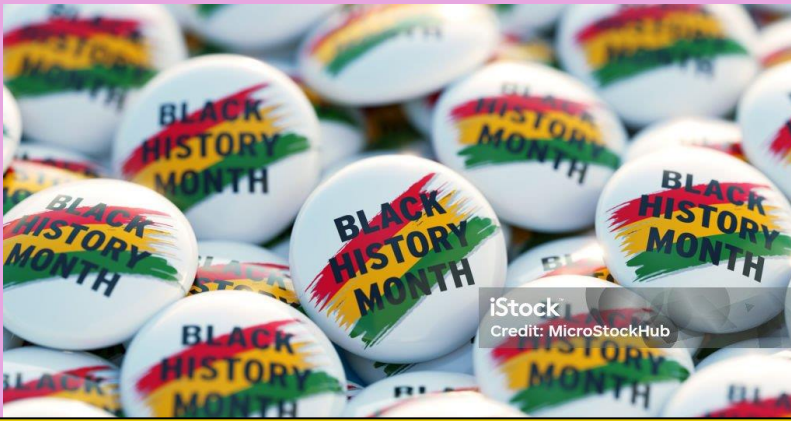
Latest news and bulletin updates

Monday,
March 3, 2026

KSC's Fitness and Health Education & Wellness (HEWP) Team

Colin Andryc, Wellness Specialist

Celebrating Black History Month: Leaders in Medical & Science



Picture Description: A pile of white rocks with "Black History Month" written over red, yellow and green stripes on them

With February being Black History Month, I decided to highlight African American contributions to the world of physical activity. I want to focus on achievements in the medical and scientific fields, including the community aspect that was fostered through African American advancements in these fields. These figures tend to be lesser known than their strictly athletic based counterparts such as a Jackie Robinson or Serena Williams. While you cannot tell the history of African Americans in athletics without those two figurehead names, I will try and focus on the people 'behind-the-scenes'.

We will first highlight the work of Dr. Edwin Bancroft Henderson. Born in Washington DC in 1883, Edwin grew up seeing the unfortunate advancement of racial segregation at the turn of the 1900's. During his teenage and young adult years, he was an athlete who preferred the role of teamwork and camaraderie over being viewed as a star player on the team. He realized the way to give back to his community was to become an educator. Upon graduating as a teacher from the University of the District of Columbia, Edwin taught and later directed, physical education in D.C. public schools for five decades and in 1943 he was recognized for his contributions, being named to the National Council on Physical Fitness.

Throughout his years of giving back to the community, Edwin went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Howard University, a master's degree from Columbia University, and a PhD in athletic training from the Central Chiropractic College in Kansas City, Missouri. He also attended summer sessions at Harvard University where he was introduced to the new game of basketball which he introduced to other young African Americans at the YMCA in D.C. From there, a small group of teams, formed in the Northeast and Henderson's D.C. in 1909 and 1910, won the National Basketball Championship.



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While influencing thousands of school children in the Washington area through the game of basketball, Henderson continued to build and help the community in multiple ways. In 1906, he formed the Interscholastic Athletic Association, which was the first all-black amateur athletic association. Around the same time, Henderson also formed the Washington, D.C. Public School Athletic League and the Eastern Board of Officials, later becoming a training center for highly sought out African American referees.



Picture Description: Silhouettes of five people playing basketball with clouds and what appears to be the ocean in the background

He was a man of action too. In the 1940's he advocated for civil rights including interracial athletic competitions. He picketed the Uline Arena for not allowing African Americans and white people to compete against each other. During that same timeframe, Dr. Henderson helped train Army recruits throughout World War II. While not physical activity-related, Dr. Henderson and his wife fought against segregation discrimination in housing and education. They also operated a NAACP chapter in Virginia.

With the next person in focus, we move our timeline to the 80's and 90's by learning about the contributions of Dr. Jocelyn Elders. Elders grew up in Arkansas, to a downtrodden, sharecropping family and was the oldest of 8 children. Despite the monetary limitations imposed by her upbringing, she was determined to build a name for herself. In 1952, she received her bachelor's in biology. A year later she joined the Army, became a second lieutenant and trained as a physical therapist while enlisted. She then attended the University of Arkansas Medical School where she obtained her M.D. in 1960. Elders also went on to earn a M.S. in Biochemistry in 1967.

Fast-forwarding to the late eighties, the governor of Arkansas at the time, Bill Clinton, appointed Dr. Elders as Director of the Arkansas Department of Health in 1987. Elders was the first African American woman in the state to hold this title. While in office, Elders focused on promoting the importance of sex education, substance abuse in schools, and proper hygiene. She reduced the teen pregnancy rate by increasing the



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availability of birth control, sex education, and counseling in school-based clinics. Dr. Elders expanded the availability of HIV testing, breast cancer screenings, and improved hospice care for the elderly. She also directly supported a large increase in early childhood screenings, seeing a 24% rise in the immunization rates of two-year-olds.

Now in 1993, President Bill Clinton appointed her as the U.S. Surgeon General. This was a momentous occasion as she was the second woman and first African American to hold this position. While Elders is often remembered for her boldness on sex education, her broader message was prevention-based health programs. Promoting daily physical activity as an integral part of disease prevention, she advocated for school-based health programs, including PE access, and community level health initiatives, including nutrition, movement and chronic disease prevention. She was quoted saying, "health education is as essential as reading, writing, and arithmetic."

While there are more individual contributors that can be studied, we shift our focus to broader societal impacts formed from groups of like-minded people. African American churches and community centers were among some of the earliest organized group fitness programs in the United States. Walking clubs, calisthenics groups, and community aerobic classes were common decades before fitness clubs existed. The Black Panther Party offered free exercise classes, martial arts, and youth physical activity programs. They also viewed fitness as a tool for empowerment and health equity. Black sororities and fraternities developed the 'stepping' movement which later influenced plyometric training, rhythm-based group fitness such as Zumba style cardio and hip-hop aerobics.

In retrospect, the achievements of the Black and African American communities on the discourse of public health and physical fitness are apparent. As I originally stated, my intention was to shine a light on those in the medical and scientific fields. While Dr. Elders and Dr. Henderson played large roles on these topics, the surface was barely scratched by highlighting these two individuals. Countless scholars, educators, community organizers, and public-health advocates across Black and African American communities have shaped the nation's understanding of movement, wellness, and preventive health, far beyond what can be captured through just a few profiles.

References:

[Changing the Face of Medicine | M. Joycelyn Elders](#)

[Joycelyn Elders, MD, 15th US Surgeon General - MED - Program in Human Sexuality \(PHS\), University of Minnesota](#)

[Edwin Bancroft Henderson \(1883-1977\) | BlackPast.org](#)

[UDC renames sports complex after Dr. Edwin Bancroft Henderson, the 'grandfather of Black basketball' - WTOP News](#)

[The Journal Of Black Research](#)

[What is Stepping? | Step Afrika!](#)



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Elevate Your Fitness with Group Exercise!

Looking to add energy and variety to your workouts? Our **Group Exercise Classes** are designed to help you build strength, improve flexibility, and boost endurance—all in a supportive, community-driven environment.

Why Join a Class?

- ✓ **Stay Motivated** – Energizing workouts led by expert instructors
- ✓ **Build Community** – Exercise alongside fellow KSC employees
- ✓ **All Levels Welcome** – Modifications provided for every fitness level

Class Lineup

- **Buffed & Balanced:** A strength-based class using body weight and optional weights for a total-body experience.
- **Stretch:** Improve flexibility, balance, and mobility through guided poses and movements.
- **Circuit Training:** A fast-paced, high-energy workout combining **strength, endurance, and cardio.**

New to Group Fitness?

No worries! Every class is beginner-friendly, and our instructors will guide you every step of the way. **Bring a coworker or friend** and make your workouts even more fun!



Picture Description: A diverse group of four fit individuals sits on a gym floor, engaging in a post-workout high-five and sharing smiles. The industrial-style gym setting features large windows and a relaxed atmosphere



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Find Your Class!

Visit the Group Exercise Schedule to explore class times, instructor details, and descriptions. This resource is updated regularly so you never miss a workout opportunity.

Monday-Friday midday classes are available in-person and on MS Teams:

Click Here to participate in Buffed & Balanced and Stretch class through MS Teams.

Click Here for previously recorded classes.

Click Here to request the outlook calendar series.

Let's move together, get stronger, and make fitness fun! See you in class!

Expand Your Options with Ames Research Center's Virtual Fitness

We want to highlight Ames Fitness Center's virtual classes, available to all NASA employees.

They offer a variety of classes, including many that we do not offer here at Kennedy Space Center, including Cardio Step, Yoga, Foam Roll & Stretch, and Cardio Kickboxing.

See their schedule below for all their classes, including their level of intensity.

The times in the schedule below are Pacific Standard Time, possibly providing more options and convenience for many of us at Kennedy Space Center.

If you participate in any of the following classes, please complete [this survey](#). Fortunately, funding was secured for *this* year after plans were made to reduce the hours and staff at the Ames Fitness Center. Because we are not sure how long this funding will be approved, we ask for your support by attending their classes and completing the [survey](#).

The Ames Fitness Center has had a prominent impact on the health of our NASA family. Help us enable them to keep up the good work and save their fitness center!



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NASA Ames Fitness Center Class Schedule

Fitness coaching and individual fitness assessment are available upon request. See staff at the front desk.

Session	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning 6:00am-9:45am		Cardio Step with Marco 6:30-7:15		Cardio Step with Marco 6:30-7:15	
Fitness Center is closed from 9:45 am - 11:00 am for custodial services.					
Mid-day 11:00am-2:30pm	Cardio Blast with Marco 11:15-11:45 ■	Foam Roll & Stretch with Marco 11:15-11:45 ●	Cardio Blast with Marco 11:15-11:45 ■	Foam Roll & Stretch with Marco 11:15-11:45 ●	Cardio Blast with Marco 11:15-11:45 ■
	Tone Up with Marco 11:45-12:15 ■		Tone Up with Marco 11:45-12:15 ■		Tone Up with Marco 11:45-12:15 ■
	Yoga with Orion 12:15-1:00 ●	CoreFit with Marco 12:00-12:30 ●	Yoga with Orion 12:15-1:00 ●	CoreFit with Marco 12:00-12:30 ●	Yoga with Orion 12:15-1:00 ●
		Cross Training with Marco 12:30-1:00 ◆		Cross Training with Marco 12:30-1:00 ◆	
Evening 2:30pm-	Tone Up with Orion 4:15-5:00 ■	Yoga with Orion 4:15-5:00 ●	Tone Up with Orion 4:15-5:00 ■	Yoga with Orion 4:15-5:00 ●	
	Cardio Kickboxing with Orion 5:30-6:00 ■	Cross Training with Orion 5:15-6:00 ◆	Cardio Kickboxing with Orion 5:30-6:00 ■	Cross Training with Orion 5:15-6:00 ◆	
● Low Intensity ■ Moderate Intensity ◆ Vigorous Intensity					



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Brittany Freeman, Wellness Coordinator

Autoimmune Awareness

March is Autoimmune Awareness month, dedicated to increase knowledge of autoimmune disease, affecting over 50 million US citizens (Association, n.d.). A disease is considered autoimmune when characterized by the body's immune system attacking healthy cells and tissues instead of protecting the body. More than 100 autoimmune diseases have been identified, primarily affecting women (80%) and the cause is thought to be genetic and environmental (Association, n.d.). Though the causes of most autoimmune diseases are quite unclear, gene-environment interactions have been researched and hypothesized as a probable cause (Miller, 2022). So, those with specific genes may be more susceptible to autoimmune diseases when triggered by environmental factors (Miller, 2022). There has been a drastic increase in autoimmune diseases over the decades (Miller, 2022). Because it often takes about 4.5 years and an average of four physicians to diagnose an autoimmune disease, it is worth considering that more research, increased ability to diagnose and identifying more autoimmune diseases, may have contributed to this increase over the past few decades. Additionally, it may be worth considering a higher diagnosis in women, because women tend to visit and follow-up with doctors more than men, especially when a diagnosis takes an average of 4.5 years and visiting an average of four physicians!

When symptoms are not debilitating, is it worth going through the trouble to get diagnosed? An early diagnosis can provide the opportunity to treat the disease early in hopes to avoid debilitating issues. Additionally, a diagnosis may reveal a probable cause or contributing factors that cause symptoms, or make them worse, in which case treatment options may be available. For example, when someone has undiagnosed Celiac Disease, the immune cells damage the small intestine



Picture Description: A stethoscope with a sign atop, saying "autoimmune disease."



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in response to eating gluten, the protein found in wheat, barley and rye. Serious complications, including anemia, malnutrition, osteoporosis and cancer, can occur if someone with Celiac Disease continues consuming gluten, but adhering to a gluten free diet can prevent these side effects.

Some common autoimmune diseases include the following:

- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Lupus
- Sjorgren's Syndrome
- Polymyalgia Rheumatic (PMR)
- Ankylosing Spondylitis
- Vasculitis
- Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- Celiac Disease
- Type I Diabetes (less prevalent than Type II diabetes which occurs when the body becomes resistant to insulin...with Type I, the immune system disables insulin production)
- Alopecia areata

According to the National Health Council, the rate of American autoimmune disease is increasing 3-12% annually (Murray, 2024), with the following statistics:

- The most common biomarker of autoimmunity, antinuclear antibodies (ANA), have almost doubled between 1988 and 2012 with a 300% increase among adolescence ages 12-19 years old.
- Type I diabetes prevalence has almost doubled in the past 40 years.
- Celiac Disease has been doubling about every 15 years.
- Multiple Sclerosis diagnosis has increased 30% worldwide between the years 2013 and 2022.
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) increased by 46% between the years 2006 and 2021.

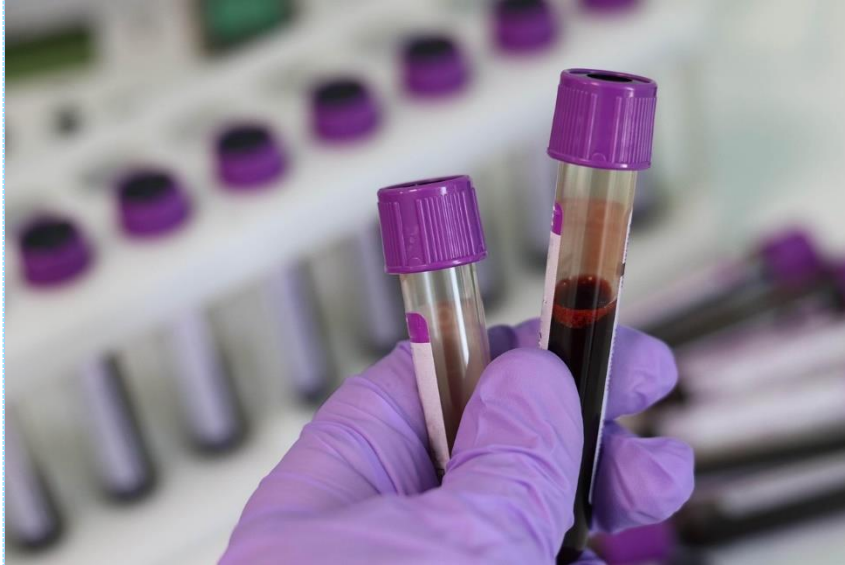


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Picture Description: Someone wearing purple gloves is holding vials of blood with purple caps."

Research on the immune system's complexity is ongoing after many years, resulting in effective treatment options. The cause of autoimmune diseases has yet to be determined, but research has resulted in a popular theory. As briefly mentioned earlier, this theory concludes that exposure to an environmental trigger elicits immune system 'misfiring,' or an immune disease, among people with a genetic predisposition. And, despite effective treatment options, a cure for autoimmune diseases has yet to be found, but the outlook remains positive as the capability to analyze genes improve. The hope is to develop safe and effective individualized treatments based on the

gene analysis of each individual compared to their immune system behavior (What's the deal with autoimmune disease?, n.d.).

What can those with an autoimmune disease, or autoimmune diseases (people with one are more likely to have another or more), do now?

1. **Diagnosis:** Get regular check-ups with a general practitioner, keeping them informed of new or ongoing symptoms, in addition to sharing family history, indicating genetic predispositions. An early diagnosis can decrease damage from chronic inflammation (Miller, 2022).
2. **Treatment:** Once a diagnosis is made, treatments can alleviate symptoms and maybe slow the progression of some autoimmune diseases.
3. **Decrease/Avoid Harmful Exposure:** If possible, limit exposure to xenobiotics (food additives, drugs, pesticides and pollutants) and air pollution, while maintaining healthy lifestyle habits to prevent infections and decrease inflammation
4. **Sleep:** Get adequate sleep (6-9 hours/night)
5. **Exercise**
6. **Decrease/Manage Stress**
7. **Avoid Tobacco**



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8. Eat a Healthy Diet

In addition to the recommendations above, the Autoimmune Protocol Diet (AIP Diet) was developed to decrease inflammation, particularly among those with autoimmune disease (A Little of This and That: Your Guide to the AIP Diet, 2023). It is an elimination diet, including steps to eliminate foods that commonly trigger inflammation then slowly adding them back to determine which foods may trigger inflammation. Inflammatory triggers vary from person to person, so this provides a method to figure out individual methods to improve quality of life for those suffering chronic inflammation. Because the elimination portion is strict, eating a variety of the foods allowed and/or doing this diet under a registered dietician nutritionist's supervision is important to avoid malnutrition. This elimination phase is four to six weeks or more, depending on when a person experiences improvements in symptoms. When improvements are realized/ideal, one non-AIP Diet food is introduced for five days to a week, so the return of any symptoms can be determined. Once triggers are determined, maintenance is achieved by avoiding or limiting foods that create symptoms. This part varies greatly from person to person and approaching it realistically with flexibility is important. Depending on the severity of symptoms, one can determine the risks of consuming certain food or how much they can handle.

Hopefully this provides insight to autoimmune disease, a positive outlook on the future of diagnosis, treatments and empowerment among those who have autoimmune issues, by providing resources to manage and improve symptoms. The prevalence of autoimmune disease is encouraging research to find root causes, safer and more effective treatment options, and maybe a cure! If diagnosed or in the process of possible diagnosis, participating in research may be an option to contribute to these goals.

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Murray, M. (2024, March 28). *Guest Blog: A Major Health Crisis: The Alarming Rise of Autoimmune Disease*. Retrieved from National Health Council: <https://nationalhealthcouncil.org/blog/a-major-health-crisis-the-alarming-rise-of-autoimmune-disease/>

What's the deal with autoimmune disease? (n.d.). Retrieved from Harvard Health Publishing: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/whats-the-deal-with-autoimmune-disease>



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Kris Schweitzer, Wellness Specialist

Get Up and Get Moving!

April is **Move More Month**, which encourages healthy habits by incorporating regular physical activity into your daily routine. Many people experience long durations in seated postures throughout their day during work, leisure activities, and commuting to and from work. One in four U.S. adults sit for longer than eight hours each day. Sitting for too long can hurt your physical and mental health.

Adults need at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week and two days of muscle-strengthening activity each week. However, only 24.2% of adults aged 18 and over meet these guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities. With 46.3% of adults not getting any physical activity in their daily lives, it is important to get up and move more throughout the day! A recent study found that swapping just 30 minutes of sitting with low intensity physical activity reduced risk of death by 17%. If everyone increased their activity, even by a small amount, we would see an improvement in overall health and lower the cost of disease in the United States.



Regular physical activity offers numerous benefits, such as improved cardiovascular health, weight management, stronger bones and muscles, better sleep, reduced stress and anxiety, and a boost in mood and energy levels. Simply, moving more promotes overall well-being.



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5 Simple Ways to Move More



Try Gardening

Working in a garden uses every major muscle group in the body, helping to offset weight gain and improve sleep.



Shop Local

Shopping in-store (versus online) involves a fair amount of walking and moving, which can burn some serious calories.



Play with Your Pets

Taking a pet for a walk or playing a simple 10-minute game of catch are great ways to get moving - plus, it's fun!



Get a Standing Desk

Standing instead of sitting burns more calories each day, reducing the risk of heart disease, obesity and diabetes.



Take the Stairs or Park Farther Away

Adding more steps to your day increases energy and concentration, builds muscle and boosts heart and lung health.

A few more tips to get more movement in your daily life include:

- Walking or riding a bike, instead of driving, when going short distances.
- Doing household chores with more intensity (*think walking lunges or squats while holding your laundry basket*).
- Taking short breaks throughout the workday to stretch and move around.
- Joining a fitness class or participating in fun sports activities.



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Kick off April by taking your first steps towards moving more with **National Walking Day** on **April 1st**. Let's walk together to benefit our hearts, bodies, and minds. Remember, exercise is one of the best ways to keep your body healthy and release stress, and walking is one of the simplest ways to get and stay active. A walk isn't just good for your body—it's a simple, powerful way to care for your mind and soul. Yet, walking rates in the U.S. continue to decline, a trend that threatens both mental and physical health. For decades, the American Heart Association has championed the importance of physical activity in communities across the country. That's why they created National Walking Day more than a decade ago—to encourage everyone to move more and stress less. Today, we know that even a brisk walk can make a world of difference for heart health and mental clarity.

HEALTH BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH REGULAR DAILY WALKING

- Helps in reduction of excess body fat and body weight; thus, prevents obesity
- Helps in controlling blood sugar level and managing Type-2 Diabetes Mellitus
- Helps in control and management of high blood pressure
- Improves blood cholesterol levels and helps in increasing good cholesterol (HDL cholesterol) levels in the blood
- Improves your circulation and keeps your heart healthy
- Strengthens your leg muscles, improves balance and coordination
- Strengthens your Bones
- Walking helps in the reduction of pain due to arthritis
- It improves your mental attitude and helps in combating depression
- Improves your Memory and reduces chances of Dementia & Alzheimer's.
- Reduces Stress
- Boost our immune system and protects from frequent illnesses
- Improves functioning of lungs and helps in improving adverse respiratory conditions, e.g. Asthma
- Improves the quality of sleep
- Protects from the risk of cancers

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Walk more and stress less!! It's no wonder walking is the most popular form of exercise. For most people, it's safe, low- or no-cost, easy to stick with and it's fun!!! Research has shown that walking can have a significant impact on your health by lowering your chances of heart disease. Walking at a lively pace at least 150 minutes a week can help you think better, feel better and sleep better. So, grab your family, your friends, your co-workers, and even the dogs to **get up and get moving!!!**



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[https://www.heart.org/en/-/media/Healthy-Living-Files/Fitness/Move More Toolkit.pdf?sc_lang=en](https://www.heart.org/en/-/media/Healthy-Living-Files/Fitness/Move%20More%20Toolkit.pdf?sc_lang=en)

We Appreciate Your Feedback!

[Fitness Survey](#)

[Health Education & Wellness Program \(HEWP\) Survey](#)



The KSC Fitness Center Team

Kennedy Space Center Health Education & Wellness Program (HEWP)

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