

C.S. Lewis & Co. Publicists

Editor/Producer,

You don't have to be French or white to be thin.

That's the message from African American nutritionist and fitness coach Dr. Rovenia M. Brock, known as Dr. Ro, who says that her black sisters are facing a serious health crisis due, in part, to misguided cultural attitudes and biases about body image, food, and health.

In a new book, *Dr. Ro's Ten Secrets to Livin' Healthy* (Bantam Dell), Dr. Ro talks frankly about black America's unhealthy food choices, self-sabotaging rationalizations about fitness, and denial about preventable diet-related diseases. This is the first diet book to address the unique needs, interests, and lifestyle issues of African American women.

Dr. Ro presents an appealing, science-based health program that is easy to implement because it involves small changes, such as adapting favorite soul food recipes, walking for exercise, and making smarter eating-out choices.

As a girl who watched her mother die of stomach cancer when she was only nine, and then struggled with her own weight throughout early adulthood, Dr. Ro understands better than anyone where black women are coming from when it comes to dieting.

A media veteran who hosted Black Entertainment Television's *Heart & Soul* for many years and currently hosts *Health Matters* on Howard University's PBS station WHUT, Dr. Ro is a lively and charismatic expert who can discuss any topic relating to fitness and nutrition for women and men of all races and ages. She will also dive into provocative topics, including:

- How African American attitudes about health are harming a new generation
- Genetic and physical differences between white and black women that impact health and body size
- How to change the eating and snacking habits of African American kids and teens
- Disturbing epidemiological trends among today's black women
- How serious illnesses can be prevented and reversed with lifestyle changes
- How racism and socioeconomic inequality affect diet and health

Named one of the top seven diet books of 2005 by USA Today, *Dr. Ro's Ten Secrets to Livin' Healthy* is one of the most original and important health books to come out in years.

Please let me know if I can arrange an interview with Dr. Ro.

Warm Regards,

Cathy Lewis

A Health Wake-up Call for African Americans

Nutritionist presents the first diet and fitness plan to tackle the health challenges of the black community.

“Women should have a little meat on their bones.”

“Soul food is God’s food.”

“Working out is for rich white folk.”

These are just a few of the cultural attitudes that prevail among African Americans that have contributed to a multigenerational health crisis.

According to America’s leading African American nutritionist, **ROVENIA M. BROCK, PHD**, better known as Dr. Ro, it’s time to start a health revolution in the black community, starting with women.

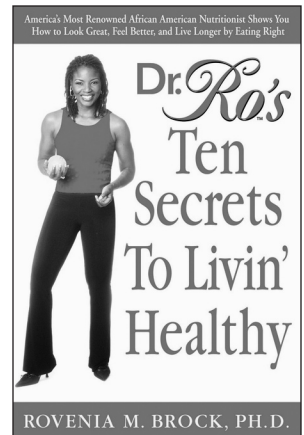
In her new book, *Dr. Ro’s Ten Secrets to Livin’ Healthy* (Bantam Dell, \$14.95), Dr. Ro offers practical ways for African American women to overcome weight problems and the health risks that accompany them, and points to genetic and cultural differences that make such changes challenging.

As only an insider can do, Dr. Ro gets to the heart of what black women want and need to know about weight loss and their health. The book features frequently asked questions, practical advice and strategies, motivational tools, informative charts, and self-assessment quizzes—all backed up by the latest medical studies.

Black women will learn:

- Why they are at greater risk than their white counterparts for hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer
- How to eat well without giving up soul food
- How to establish healthy eating traditions for kids
- How to prevent common medical problems, such as osteoporosis and menopausal symptoms, through diet
- How to fit exercise into a working woman’s schedule
- Dr. Ro’s Color Plate System, an easy way to eat without counting calories or tracking fat grams
- Delicious recipes from the Afro-Caribbean tradition

Dr. Ro’s Ten Secrets to Livin’ Healthy is breaking new ground as the first diet and fitness book to come from inside the African American community, written by a highly acclaimed expert who understands the needs, biases, and obstacles that challenge the health and well being of black women and their families.



Nearly 4 out of 5 black women in this country are overweight or obese, according to the 6-year National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

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About the Author

ROVENIA M. BROCK, PHD, a.k.a. Dr. Ro, is an award-winning nutritionist, fitness expert, lecturer, media personality, and author of *Dr. Ro's Ten Secrets to Livin' Healthy* (Bantam Dell).

Dr. Ro earned a BS in Food and Nutrition from Virginia State University; a double master's degree in Community Nutrition and Broadcast Journalism from Howard University; and a PhD in Nutritional Sciences, also from Howard University.

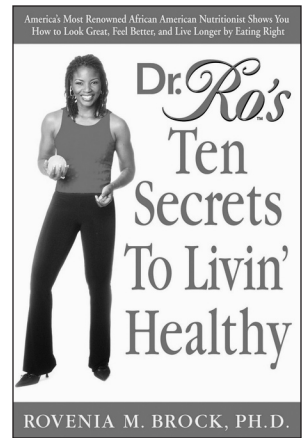
An articulate and charismatic media pro, Dr. Ro is known and loved by millions of television fans. She was the host of Black Entertainment Television's *Heart & Soul*, the first-ever national health and fitness television show for African American women. She was the Nutrition Counselor for ABC News' "Lifetime Live" and the Weekly Nutritionist to NBC's *Morning Show* in Washington, DC. Dr. Ro was also Health Expert for the WHUR *Adult Mix Morning Show*, the leading adult listening radio station in Washington, DC, where she hosted a weekly segment, "Heads Up on Health with Dr. Ro." In addition, she served as Medical Correspondent for BET News.

Currently, Dr. Ro is Resident Nutrition Expert at BET.com, where she writes the syndicated column "Livin' Healthy with Dr. Ro." She also pens a column, "Eating Healthy with Dr. Ro," in *Heart & Soul* magazine. Dr. Ro can still be seen on television as host of *Health Matters*, a health and lifestyles program aired on WHUT, Howard University's PBS station.

Dr. Ro has been featured and quoted widely in print venues, including *Ebony*, *O* magazine, *Essence*, and *Self*, as well as many major daily newspapers, among others. She continues to be a Contributing Nutrition Editor to *Heart and Soul* magazine.

She has been the recipient of many awards, including The 2004 Dorothy Height SHERO award; the 2002 PhD Alumni of the Year Award from Howard University; the 2002 Women in Medicine Award from the National Medical Association; and awards from such organizations as the March of Dimes, the American Cancer Society, and the American Heart Association.

Her newest endeavor is an entrepreneurial one. As founder of Dr. Ro Lifestyle, Inc., she is creator of her own line of active wear and self-care products for women, including Dr. Ro Gear, Dr. Ro Bath and Body Therapy, and Dr. Ro Nutrition Therapy.



"In order to lose all the unhealthy weight I'd gained by age 37, I first had to make a mental commitment to change. That's everybody's first step, usually motivated by some kind of wake-up call having to do with the way they feel or the way they look. My first motivation was mainly vanity."

—DR. RO, on how she went down 4 dress sizes

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Interview Topics

Why Black Women Are Overweight

Expert says a cultural change in this community is overdue.

Black women face more weight challenges than their white counterparts, partly due to unhealthy lifestyles and attitudes, according to Dr. Ro. As a result, they have higher rates of such weight-related conditions as heart disease and diabetes. Learn:

- Why black women resist exercise
- Why black women mistrust the diet recommendations of white experts
- How a “culture of curves” has hampered black women’s healthy body image
- How the traditional African American diet has created generations of unhealthy adults

The Economics of Thinness

Expert debunks myth that you have to be rich to be fit.

Two common attitudes among African Americans: “Thin is in” is a white, European ideal, and working out is an activity for the wealthy. Dr. Ro says this way of thinking has got to change. She discusses:

- A walking-based exercise program that is free
- How socio-economic factors affect weight and health
- Practical tips for budgeting in work-out gear
- Why poor people in the Caribbean and Africa are healthier and thinner than wealthier African Americans

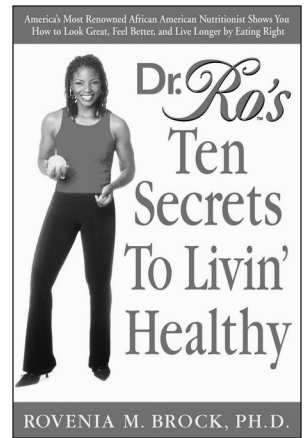
Food Can Save Your Life

Learn dietary prescriptions for everything from growing better nails to managing memory loss and hot flashes.

Every day, new research is revealing how eating habits impact our health. The good news, says Dr. Ro, is that eating for your health also leads to a better figure. Discover:

- Best anti-aging foods
- How to prevent diabetes and heart disease with diet
- What women can eat to prevent fibroids, breast cancer, hot flashes, memory loss, and colon cancer
- How to test your vitamin and mineral IQ
- 22 important nutrients you should be eating, and foods that contain them

— MORE —



- Black women are 69% more likely than white women to suffer heart disease and heart attacks
- 1 in 4 black women age 55 and older has diabetes.
- African American women have the highest breast cancer death rates of any group.

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A Tree that Could Save Your Life

Learn how to make a your family medical tree.

How many African American families have an uncle who is an amputee, a great grandma who was blind, and other relatives who had a “touch of sugar”? Discovering patterns of diabetes and other diet-related illnesses in your extended family, says Dr. Ro, can motivate you to create a different dietary legacy for your kids. Learn:

- How to create a family medical tree
- How to mine living relatives’ memory for health clues
- How old photos can offer a wealth of visual clues
- Questions that help your immediate family overcome their reluctance to give up family secrets

The “New” Soul Food

Learn how to convert unhealthy soul food into nutritious dishes.

We’ve all heard that soul food is bad for us. Dr. Ro says it doesn’t have to be that way—not when you update traditional recipes to make them healthy. Find out:

- The history of soul food and how it has evolved
- The nutritional downside of soul food
- How to modify favorite recipes into new, healthy versions

Stay-on-Track Tips

Learn how to stay motivated with fitness and diet.

When you’re trying to change your behavior to adopt a healthier lifestyle, it’s hard to stay motivated. Dr. Ro offers secrets to help you stick to your new health regiment. Learn:

- How to squeeze ten-minute bouts of activity into your day
- How to get friends and family to boost your motivation
- Eating out tips and tricks

An African American Food Guide Pyramid

Problems with the current guidelines and how to solve them.

The new Food Guide Pyramid was not written with black people in mind. For example, one in three African Americans is lactose intolerant, but the Pyramid suggests three dairy servings a day. Dr. Ro addresses these issues as she discusses:

- Nondairy calcium-rich foods that are easy on digestion
- What’s wrong with the “Soul Food Pyramid,” designed as an alternative to the USDA’s version
- Dr. Ro’s Color Plate System—a no-nonsense approach that anyone can quickly learn and understand

Dr. Ro’s Color Plate System At-a-Glance

Every day, create colorful meals from the following groups, adding whole grains and small amounts of soy, nut, or lean animal protein:

Red: e.g., tomatoes, red peppers, beets, strawberries, watermelon

Purple: e.g., blackberries, eggplant, radicchio, raisins, grapes

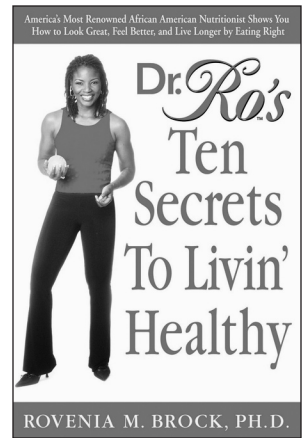
Green: e.g., collard greens, broccoli, turnip greens, Brussels sprouts, green beans

Orange: e.g., pumpkin, mango, sweet potato, apricots, peaches, butternut squash

Yellow: e.g., summer squash, pineapple, lemon, guava, bananas

Suggested Interview Questions

1. Talk about the health crisis that's facing African Americans today.
2. How does the health of the African American population differ from that of whites or other racial groups?
3. How are African American women in denial about their health?
4. How are black and white women's bodies different, and what impact might these differences have on black women's health and size?
5. What are the main cultural factors unique to black women that affect weight and increase their risk for disease?
6. What are some of the biggest hurdles African American women face when it comes to changing their eating and exercise habits?
7. You suggest that the Food Guide Pyramid was not written with the needs of African Americans in mind. Talk about that.
8. What is Dr. Ro's Color Plate System?
9. How can parents change the eating habits of their kids, who may have grown up on fast food?
10. What tips do you have for people who like to eat out?
11. What are some ways people can modify fatty, salty, nutrient-poor soul food into healthier versions of the same recipes?
12. What are the pros and cons of the most popular diets out there?
13. What are the best ways working women can get in shape if they don't have a lot of time and money?
14. You're in great shape. Were you always?
15. What aspects of your personal history inspired you to pursue a career in health and fitness?



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6 Ways Black Women Rationalize Themselves to Death

Rationalization #1: Even if chitlins are fatty, the hot sauce and vinegar will burn it off.

Dr. Ro: Chitterlings are definitely a fat-laden food, and nothing you put on top of them will make them less so. They may taste good, but they have little nutritional value.

Rationalization #2: “Thin is in” is the white world’s perpetuation of European ideals. Our bodies are different; we’re supposed to be round.

Dr. Ro: This is just an excuse to lug around extra weight. You’re not supposed to be overweight or obese. And you’re certainly not supposed to be in ill health for the sake of a few extra curves.

Rationalization #3: What does it matter if the potato salad and fried chicken from Sunday’s church supper were loaded with fat? It was in church, and God can’t be wrong. Right?

Dr. Ro: God didn’t fry that chicken in oil or use fatty mayonnaise in the potato salad. He didn’t force you to eat it, either.

Rationalization #4: I don’t make enough money to lose weight. Only celebrities like Oprah and Janet Jackson have the money for a personal trainer and can afford to get in shape.

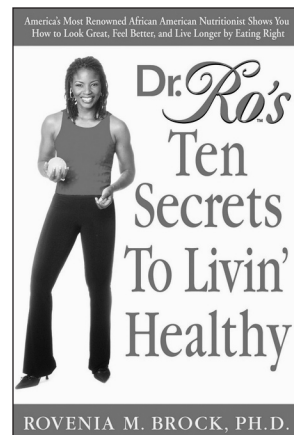
Dr. Ro: African American women spend a small fortune on the things they want: acrylic nails, hair, makeup, clothes, and massage (61 percent more than their white counterparts). But if money is really an issue, walking in the park or the mall, roller skating through the neighborhood, and jumping rope are free.

Rationalization #5: I look good in my clothes. Beautiful women come in all shapes and sizes.

Dr. Ro: If you keep buying a larger size to cover your ever-expanding girth, you’ll look good in your casket too. You *are* beautiful, but a healthy woman doesn’t carry around twenty or more pounds of excess weight. Health, unlike beauty, is *not* in the eye of the beholder.

Rationalization #6: It’s expensive to eat healthy.

Dr. Ro: Go tell that to people in the Caribbean and in Africa who live on less money than you or I, yet manage to do so in a much more healthful way—thriving on diets of fruits, vegetables, grains, and little meat. They weigh far less and suffer fewer of the chronic diseases we have here in America.



- One study found that at 20 pounds over their healthy weight, black women didn’t think they had a weight problem.
- Researchers also found that husbands and boyfriends of more than half of the women studied said they liked the weight their women carried on their bodies.

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