

Diabetes in the African-American Community

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects approximately 246 million people worldwide. The International Diabetes Federation predicts that by 2025, that figure will grow to 380 million people.¹ In the United States alone, more than 20 million Americans are living with diabetes, the majority of whom are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.² Research suggests that by 2050 diabetes will affect 48.3 million people in the United States, with the largest increase occurring in minority groups.³ In particular, African Americans are disproportionately affected by diabetes:⁴

- Approximately 3.2 million (13.3 percent) African Americans age 20 or older have diabetes.⁴
- African Americans are 1.8 times more likely to have diabetes as non-Hispanic whites.⁴
- 25 percent of African Americans between the ages of 65 and 74 have diabetes.⁴
- One in four African American women over 55 years of age has diabetes.⁴

As with type 2 diabetes in general, many factors contribute to the development and management of the condition in the African-American community, including lack of awareness or understanding of the condition, excessive weight and lack of exercise.⁵

Diabetes Complications

Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to a number of serious and sometimes life-threatening complications, including blindness, kidney disease, loss of limbs, heart disease, stroke and nerve damage. In fact, heart disease and stroke account for approximately 65 percent of deaths in people with diabetes. Additionally, 60 percent to 70 percent of people with diabetes have mild to severe forms of nervous system damage, including impaired sensation and pain in the feet or hands.⁶

Diabetes complications such as blindness, kidney disease and amputation greatly impact the African-American community.

- African Americans are almost 50 percent as likely to develop diabetic retinopathy (the most common diabetic eye disease that can cause vision loss)⁶ as non-Hispanic whites.⁵
- African Americans are 2.6 to 5.6 times as likely to suffer from kidney disease with more than 4,000 new cases of end stage renal disease (ESRD) each year.⁵
- African Americans are 2.7 times as likely to suffer from lower-limb amputations.⁵

¹ "Did You Know" International Diabetes Federation. <http://www.idf.org/home/index.cfm?node=37>. Last accessed 21 January 2008.

² "National Diabetes Statistics" <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/statistics>. Last accessed 21 January 2008.

³ Nayrayanm K.M. Venkat, et al. "Impact of Recent Increase in Incidence on Future Diabetes Burden" *Diabetes Care* 2006;29:2114-2116.

⁴ African American and Diabetes Facts. <http://www.diabetes.org/communityprograms-and-localevents/africanamerican/facts.jsp>. Last accessed 21 January 2008.

⁵ <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-statistics/complications.jsp>. Last accessed 21 January 2008.

⁶ "Diabetic Retinopathy." National Eye Institute. <http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/diabetic/retinopathy.asp#1a>. Last accessed 21 January 2008.