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Excellence in Health Education Programming

Brochure # 2

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African-Americans And Diabetes



Give Life

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What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic metabolic disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches, and other food into energy.

How many African-Americans have diabetes?

Over 2.8 million African-Americans have diabetes; 1.5 million have been diagnosed and it is estimated that 730,000 have not yet been diagnosed. There are 4 times as many African-Americans diagnosed with diabetes today as there were in 1968.

For every 6 white Americans who have diabetes, 10 African-Americans have the disease. Among African-Americans 20 years and older, the prevalence of diabetes is 8.2 percent compared with 4.8 percent among non-Hispanic whites.

What is the prevalence by type of diabetes?

Type I diabetes accounts for 5 to 10 percent of all cases.

Type 2 diabetes accounts for 90 to 95 percent of all cases.

What is the prevalence of diabetes by gender?

In every age group the prevalence of diabetes is higher among African-American women than among African-American men.

Among African-Americans 20 years or older, 11.8 percent of women and 8.5 percent of men have diabetes.

Nearly one out of three African-American women ages 65 to 74 years has diabetes.

What is the prevalence by age?

Diabetes is particularly common among middle-aged and older African-American adults.

The proportion of the African-American population that has diabetes rises from less than 1 percent for those younger than 20 years old to as high as 32 percent for women ages 65 to 74 years old. Twenty-eight percent of women and 19 percent of men ages 50 and older have diabetes.

In just 12 years, national health surveys show that diabetes' prevalence for African-Americans ages 40 to 74 has doubled from 8.9 percent in 1976-1980 to 18.2 percent in 1988-1994.

In the 1988-1994 National Health and Nutrition Survey (NHANES 111), 11.2 percent of whites ages 40 to 74 years had diabetes compared with 18.2 percent of African Americans.

What is the death rate for diabetes among African-Americans?

Death rates for African-Americans with diabetes is 27 percent higher for African-Americans compared with whites. Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death for those ages 45 years or older.

Source: Diabetes in African-Americans Fact Sheet, National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, NIH

How do diabetes-related complications affect African-Americans?

African-Americans with diabetes are more likely to develop diabetes complications and experience greater disability from the complications than whites.

The frequency of diabetic retinopathy (blindness) is 40 to 50 percent higher in African-Americans than in white Americans.

African-Americans with diabetes experience kidney failure (also called end-stage renal disease) about four times more often than diabetic white Americans. In 1995, there were 27,258 new cases of kidney failure attributed to diabetes in African-Americans.

What can African-Americans with diabetes do to prevent these complications?

The chances of having diabetes complications can be reduced or delayed significantly by keeping blood sugar levels under control. People with diabetes can control the disease by eating the right amounts of a variety of foods, getting regular physical activity, taking diabetes medicine as prescribed, and monitoring blood sugar levels.



(Keep your doctor Appointments)