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Diabetes: African Americans Deadly Foe

By Drahcir Semaj

Diabetes: African Americans Deadly Foe

by: **Drahcir Semaj**

Diabetes is having a devastating effect on the African American community. Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death in African Americans and their death rates are twenty seven percent higher than whites.

Over 2.8 million African Americans have diabetes and one third of them dont know they have the disease. In addition, twenty five percent of African Americans between the ages of 65 74 have diabetes and one in four African American women, over the age of 55, have been diagnosed with the disease

The cause of diabetes is a mystery, but researchers believe that both genetics and environmental factors play roles in who will develop the disease.

Heredity

Researchers believe that African Americans and African Immigrants are predisposed to developing diabetes. Research suggests that African Americans and recent African immigrants have inherited a "thrifty gene" from their African ancestors.

This gene may have enabled Africans to use food energy more efficiently during cycles of feast and famine. Now, with fewer cycles of feast and famine, this gene may make weight control more difficult for African Americans and African Immigrants.

This genetic predisposition, coupled with impaired glucose tolerance, is often associated with the genetic tendency toward high blood pressure. People with impaired glucose tolerance have higher than normal blood glucose levels and are at a higher risk for developing diabetes.

What is Diabetes?

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Diabetes, commonly known as sugar diabetes, is a condition that occurs when the body is unable to properly produce or use insulin. Insulin is needed by the body to process sugar, starches and other foods into energy. Diabetes is a chronic condition for which there is no known cure; diabetes is a serious disease and should not be ignored.

Diabetics often suffer from low glucose levels (sugar) in their blood. Low blood sugar levels can make you disorientated, dizzy, sweaty, hungry, have headaches, have sudden mood swings, have difficulty paying attention, or have tingling sensations around the mouth.

Types of Diabetes

Pre-diabetes is a condition that occurs when a person's blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough for a diagnosis of type II diabetes. Pre-diabetes can cause damage to the heart and

circulatory system, but pre-diabetes can often be controlled by controlling blood glucose levels. By controlling pre-diabetes you can often prevent or delay the onset of Type II diabetes.

Type I or juvenile-onset diabetes usually strikes people under the age of 20, but can strike at any age. Five to ten percent of African Americans who are diagnosed with diabetes are diagnosed with this type of the disease. Type I diabetes is an autoimmune disease where the body produces little or no insulin and this type of diabetes must be treated with daily insulin injections.

Type II or adult onset diabetes is responsible for ninety to ninety-five percent of diagnosed diabetes cases in African Americans. Type II results from a condition where the body fails to properly use insulin. According to the American Diabetes Association, Type II is usually found in people over 45, who have diabetes in their family, who are overweight, who don't exercise and who have cholesterol problems. In the early stages it can often be controlled with lifestyle changes, but in the later stages diabetic pills or insulin injections are often needed.

Pregnancy related diabetes or gestational diabetes can occur in pregnant women. Gestational diabetes is often associated with high glucose blood levels or hyperglycemia. Gestational diabetes affects about four percent of all pregnant women. The disease usually goes away after delivery, but women who suffer from gestational diabetes are at a higher risk for developing diabetes later in life.

Symptoms of Diabetes

The most common symptoms of diabetes include:

excessive urination including frequent trips to the bathroom

increased thirst

increased appetite

blurred vision

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unusual weight loss

increased fatigue

irritability

Complications from Diabetes

Diabetes can lead to many disabling and life threatening complications. Strokes, blindness, kidney failure, heart disease, and amputations are common complications that effect African Americans who have diabetes

Kidney Disease

Diabetes is the second leading cause of end stage kidney disease in African Americans, accounting for about thirty percent of the new cases each year, says the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois. Up to twenty–one percent of people who develop diabetes will develop kidney disease.

Amputations

Diabetes is the leading cause of non–traumatic lower–limb amputations in the United States. More than sixty percent of non–traumatic lower–limb amputations in America occur among people with diabetes and African Americans are almost three times more likely to have a lower limb amputated due to diabetes than whites. According to Center for Disease Control (CDC), about 82,000 non–traumatic lower–limb amputations were performed among people with diabetes in 2001.

Blindness

African Americans are twice as likely to suffer from diabetes related blindness. Diabetics can develop a condition called Diabetic Retinopathy, a disease affecting the blood vessels of the eye, which can lead to impaired vision and blindness. Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in people from 20 74 years of age and up to 24,000 people loose their sight each year because of diabetes.

Heart Disease

People with diabetes are up to four times more likely to develop heart disease as people who dont have diabetes. Atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) is more common in diabetics and can lead to increased risk of heart attacks, stroke, and poor circulation throughout the body.

Diabetes Risk Factors

You have a greater risk for developing diabetes if you have any of the following:

Obesity

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Family history of diabetes

Pre-diabetes

Low physical activity

Age greater than 45 years

High blood pressure

High blood levels of triglycerides

HDL cholesterol of less than 35

Previous diabetes during pregnancy or baby weighing more than 9 pounds

Diabetes has had a devastating effect on the African American community; it is the fifth leading cause of death and second leading cause of end stage kidney disease in African Americans.

African Americans suffer from complications from diabetes at a much higher rate than the rest of the population. African Americans are three times more likely to have a lower limb amputated because of

diabetes and twice as likely to suffer from diabetes related blindness.

If you have any of the diabetes risk factors you should contact your physician and have a blood glucose test. Also discuss with your physician lifestyle changes you can take to lower your chances of developing diabetes.

Drahcir Semaj is a freelance writer who writes about issues affecting African Americans. He can be contacted at

If You Have Diabetes, You May Be Entitled To No Cost Diabetic Supplies

By Rob Wiley

This article is intended to inform people with diabetes in regards to their diabetic supplies. When I found out that my sister was diagnosed with the disease I started to research more and came across some useful information that might be helpful to others.

Diabetes is the country's sixth leading cause of death by disease. As you may know it is the leading cause of blindness, kidney disease, heart disease and amputations. Diabetes claims the lives of more than 193,000 Americans each year. Approximately 18.2 million Americans have diabetes, but one-third of those are undiagnosed. And many people that do have diabetes pay for their diabetes supplies. If you have insurance and live in the United States, you may be eligible.

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As of May 2004, forty–six states have some type of laws requiring health insurance coverage to include treatment for diabetes. The states not included are Alabama, Idaho, North Dakota and Ohio.

As of 2002, two states, Georgia and Wisconsin passed an expansion of current coverage requirements. In 2003 Hawaii adopted a resolution to clarify its mandate of diabetes education coverage. No new laws were passed during the first four months of 2004.

About 17 million Americans have diabetes today, including about 16 million with Type 2. In addition, at least 16 million more Americans have pre–diabetes — a condition that raises a person*s risk of getting type 2 diabetes. However, a diagnosis of pre–diabetes does not mean that diabetes is inevitable, and the new campaign aims at encouraging people to take modest steps that will reduce their risks. Nationally, diabetes has increased nearly 50 percent in the past 10 years alone, according to CDC estimates.

It is good news that more states are passing laws to further expand health coverage regarding diabetes. If you have diabetes and insurance, most likely you can get your supplies at now cost.

Go to this url:

and click on the "get more

information" link to see if you qualify for no cost diabetes supplies.

This article was written using various sources. Some of the statistics may not be up to date at the time of this writing.

Rob Wiley has spent the last 13 years serving the media industry in fields involving graphic design, marketing, website design and development. His experience has been shared with numerous businesses that have profited from his advice and skills. Read this and other articles at:

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