

# DIABETES FACTS

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## DIABETES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

### What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease that affects the body's ability to produce or respond to insulin, a hormone that allows blood glucose (blood sugar) to enter the cells of the body and be used for energy. Diabetes falls into two main categories: type 1, which usually begins during childhood or adolescence, and type 2, the most common form of the disease, usually occurring after age 45.

### How Does it Affect African Americans?

Approximately 2.3 million or 10.8% of all African Americans have diabetes, however, one-third of them do not know it. With its complications – blindness, kidney disease, amputations, heart attack and stroke – diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death (sixth-leading cause of death by disease) in the United States.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that has no cure.

### Prevalence

- African Americans are **1.7 times more likely to have diabetes**, than Non-Hispanic Whites.
- **Twenty-five percent** of African Americans between the ages of **65 and 74** have diabetes.
- **One in four** African American women over **55 years of age** has diabetes.

### African Americans and Diabetic Complications

African Americans experience higher rates of at least three of the serious complications of diabetes: blindness, amputation and end stage renal disease (kidney failure).

- **Diabetic retinopathy** is a term used for all abnormalities of the small blood vessels of the retina caused by diabetes, such as weakening of blood vessel walls or leakage from blood vessels. African Americans are **twice as likely** to suffer from **diabetes-related blindness**.
- Diabetes is the most frequent cause of non-traumatic lower limb **amputations**. The risk of a leg amputation is 15 to 40 times greater for a person with diabetes. Each year 56,000 people lose their foot or leg to diabetes. Among people with diabetes, African Americans are 1.5 to 2.5 times more likely to suffer from lower limb amputations.
- Ten to twenty-one percent of all people with diabetes develop **kidney disease**. In 1995, 27,900 people initiated treatment for **end stage renal disease (kidney failure)** because of diabetes. African Americans with diabetes are **2.6 to 5.6 times more likely** to suffer from kidney disease with **more than 4,000 new cases** of end stage renal disease each year.