



TYPE 2 DIABETES IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

**Understanding the Complications That May Happen
Without Proper Care**

STAYING HEALTHY – THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER MANAGEMENT OF TYPE 2 DIABETES

Diabetes is one of the most serious health issues faced by the African American community. Compared with the general population, African Americans are more strongly affected by diabetes.¹ African Americans, compared with non-Hispanic whites, are^{2,3}:

- Twice as likely to be diagnosed with diabetes^{2,3}
- More likely to have high blood pressure and obesity^{2,4}
- More likely to suffer from diabetes complications such as blindness, kidney disease, and amputations^{2,3}

On the following pages, you will find more information on these potential complications. While it is important to be aware of these issues, it's also important to remember that you can make a difference. By working with your healthcare team to focus on living well, eating right, staying active, and taking medication when needed, you can help your body stay healthy.⁵⁻⁸



POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS

Potential Brain and Heart Complications

High Blood Pressure and Stroke

When your blood sugar (glucose) level stays too high for too long, over time it may damage your nerves and blood vessels.⁹ As someone with diabetes, you may also have issues keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol within a healthy range.^{5,9,10} Together, these related issues may cause your blood vessels to become narrowed or clogged by fatty deposits that may block oxygen and other needed materials from reaching your heart and brain. This can lead to a heart attack or stroke.¹¹

A stroke can cause pain, numbness, movement problems, and issues with thinking, remembering, and speaking.¹²

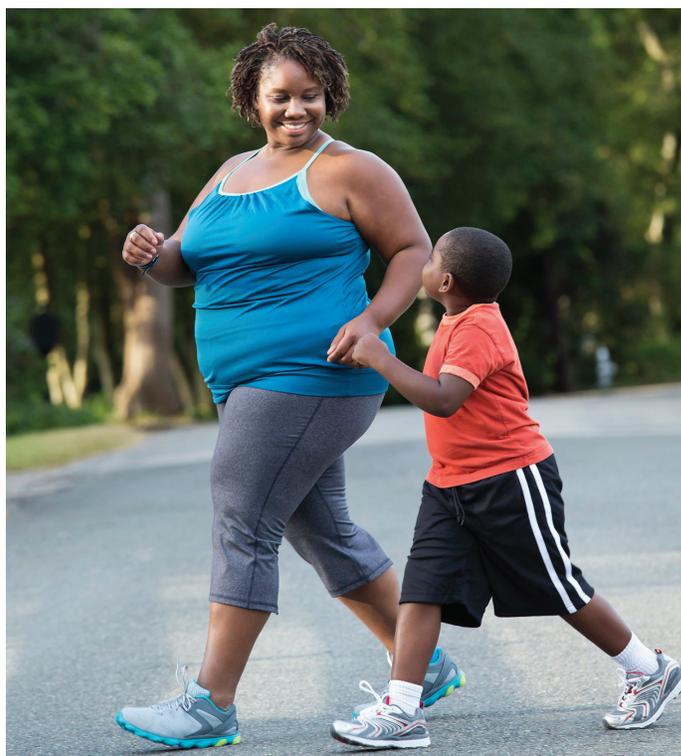
Since the risk of high blood pressure is greater in African Americans, you should also work with your healthcare team to watch your blood pressure.² To stay healthy, it's important that you work with your healthcare team to keep track of your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol. Also, if you are a smoker, it's important that you think about quitting. Smoking has been linked to raising cholesterol and blood pressure.¹³

Potential Complications Related to an Unhealthy Weight

Overweight/Obese

Having type 2 diabetes and being overweight or obese may raise your risk for high blood pressure, unhealthy cholesterol levels, and high blood sugar.¹⁴ It may also raise your chances of heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.¹⁴

To stay healthy, work with your healthcare team to find your healthy weight. Your healthcare team can also help you develop a weight-loss or exercise plan that's right for you if needed.



POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS (CONT'D)

Potential Vision Complications

Blindness

People with diabetes may be at risk for eye problems that can lead to blindness.^{15,16}

People with diabetes are also more likely to suffer from other vision-related conditions such as glaucoma.¹⁷ High blood sugar levels may damage the small blood vessels in your eye's retina. This may lead to a condition known as diabetic retinopathy. This may affect how you see. You may not notice any changes in your vision at first or experience any pain. However, if this condition isn't treated, you may lose some or all of your eyesight permanently.¹⁷



As well as working with your healthcare team to keep your blood sugar and blood pressure within a healthy range, regular eye checkups may help detect any potential problems early.¹⁷ Remember to have your eyes checked at least once a year, even if your vision seems ok.¹⁷

Potential Kidney Complications

Kidney Disease

Your kidneys have an important job in your body. The tiny blood vessels inside them act as filters to remove waste products from your blood.¹⁸ High levels of blood sugar may overwork your kidneys, and, over time, this stress can cause them to leak useful protein into the urine.^{18,19} This condition may become very serious and require you to use a machine to filter your blood (dialysis) or to get a kidney transplant.¹⁸ It's very important that your kidneys stay healthy, as diabetes has been shown to be the leading cause of kidney failure.¹⁹

By working with your healthcare team to manage your blood sugar, you can help keep your kidneys in good health. Since the risk of high blood pressure is greater in African Americans, you should also work with your healthcare team to watch your blood pressure. High blood pressure has been found to be the number 2 cause of kidney failure.¹⁹ Be wary of smoking, as it may raise your blood pressure, and consider quitting if you do smoke.¹³

POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS (CONT'D)

Potential Complications Related to Nerves, Legs, and Feet

Risk of Amputation

People with diabetes are far more likely to have a foot or leg amputated than other people.²⁰ This is due to a type of nerve damage associated with diabetes known as neuropathy.²¹ A very common one that may affect your feet is peripheral neuropathy.^{20,21} Another potential concern that happens with diabetes is known as peripheral arterial disease (also called PAD).²² PAD reduces blood flow to the feet, which can make your feet less able to fight infection and to heal. This affects your legs but may also raise your risk of heart attack and stroke.²² PAD is estimated to affect as many as 33% of people with diabetes over the age of 50.²²

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