African Americans Pay Attention and Stop Diabetes

December 7, 2012 By Rhonda Peters

Diabetes is America's sixth leading cause of death and over 3.7 million African Americans are diagnosed with this deadly disease.[1] As diabetes continue to rise for not only the old, but also the youth, so does the national health care costs for diagnosed diabetes. People it's time to stop diabetes! Today the total health care costs for people diagnosed with diabetes is $174,000,000,000 ($174 Billion), and this does not include the costs for people with gestational diabetes, pre-diabetes and the undiagnosed; in fact, if those people were included the total health care costs could exceed $218,000,000,000 ($218 Billion)! [2] Though this is a small cost in the overall total health care costs, it's still enough to make a change, and Stop Diabetes!

Before we can stop diabetes, let's talk about what it is. Diabetes occurs when a person's blood glucose (also known as blood sugar) levels are above normal range. Glucose is made when carbohydrates from food are broken down after eaten and carried into the bloodstream; this process is aided by insulin, which is a hormone that is produced in the pancreas. There are two things that can happen when the blood sugar is off:

1. The body is no longer producing insulin and can't carry glucose into the cells to convert to energy; this is also known as Type 1 Diabetes.
2. The body produces insulin, but the the body is slow to respond to the insulin, thus preventing the glucose from entering the cells to convert to energy; in this situation, it is called Type 2 Diabetes.

Most of the Type 1 diabetic diagnosis occurs at a young age, which is why it has been called Juvenile Diabetes. Medication through daily insulin injections is the treatment at this time for this disease. Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes and makes up 90 to 95% of the total diabetes diagnosis![3] Unlike Type 1 diabetes, Type 2 diabetes can be treated and prevented by eating a healthy diet and exercising daily. Yes, one can stop diabetes just by eating a healthy diet and exercising.

There are over 10 million Americans 20 years and older diagnosed with diabetes and of that number African Americans make up 3.7 million! These are just the diagnosed people, the number is even higher, if the number of pre-diabetes is counted!! It has been stated that two-thirds of people don't have symptoms when they are diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. Consequently, it is vitally important that you visit your health care provider for a full physical, especially if you possess some of the following common risk factors for Type 2 diabetes[2]:

- Family history

- Obesity
- Poor diet
- Elevated blood sugar
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Ethnicity (African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders have higher incidences)
- Lack of exercise or physical activity

Don’t be one of the 68% of people who don’t treat Type 2 diabetes as a serious health threat. Get to it together, start today and make a plan to get your life in order or help your loved ones get their lives in order to either prevent or stop diabetes. Hopefully one of the things that you start with first is getting rid of the bad junk food, fried foods, sugary cakes and pies, and replacing it with healthier food choices!

Are you ready for the challenge? Ready to Stop Diabetes? Make sure you Follow me on Twitter (@RhondaPeters) and Like my on Facebook Fan page (/SoWhatCanIEatNow) so we can continue the conversation!

Sources:
[1]McGinnis, Marianne. Prevent Outsmart Diabetes. Rodale, Inc. 2004.
[2]“Stop Diabetes.” American Diabetes Association. November 2012. .
[3]Vernon, Mary C. Atkins Diabetes Revolution. Harper Collins Publishing, Inc. New York, 2004.

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