

Need another reason to attend your regularly scheduled doctor appointments – even when you're not sick or symptomatic? Diabetes, one of the most serious diseases to impact the African American community, initially causes no pain.

“The average person with diabetes has the disease for eight years prior to being diagnosed,” said Dr. James Whitfield Reed, a professor of medicine and chief of endocrinology and metabolism at Morehouse School of Medicine. “Twenty to 25 percent of diabetics already have complications at the time of diagnosis.”

Diabetes, a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin and, therefore, cannot convert sugar, starch and other foods into energy, is at epidemic levels in the United States, according to Reed. Obesity, another American epidemic, shares a clear-cut connection to the disease.

“Eighty-five to 95 percent of all type 2 diabetes diagnoses stem from obesity, and type 2 diabetes makes up 95 percent of all cases of diabetes,” Reed said. “If you have a genetic predisposition to diabetes and your lifestyle is conducive to the disease, you will develop it. If you improve your lifestyle, you'll improve your chances of not developing the disease.”

Reed said diabetes has three classic indicators – frequent urination, increased appetite and increased thirst. “These are all subtle signs,” said Reed. “The biggest indicator is if a person has immediate family members with the disease. If so, he or she should be screened at least once a year.”

The earlier the diagnosis, the better chance a person has at avoiding complications such as blindness, kidney failure, heart disease and stroke. Diabetes also is the leading cause of nontraumatic amputations in the United States, said Reed.

“Diabetes is a very complex disease requiring a lot of patient knowledge,” Reed said. “People need to know they play a part in managing their disease. The better-educated patient is the easier patient to treat.”

The American Diabetes Association reports that 25 percent of African Americans between the ages of 65 and 74 have diabetes. However, said Reed, there are steps a person can take to prevent the disease, such as maintaining a proper diet and exercising adequately – at least 35 minutes of leisure-time activity four days per week.

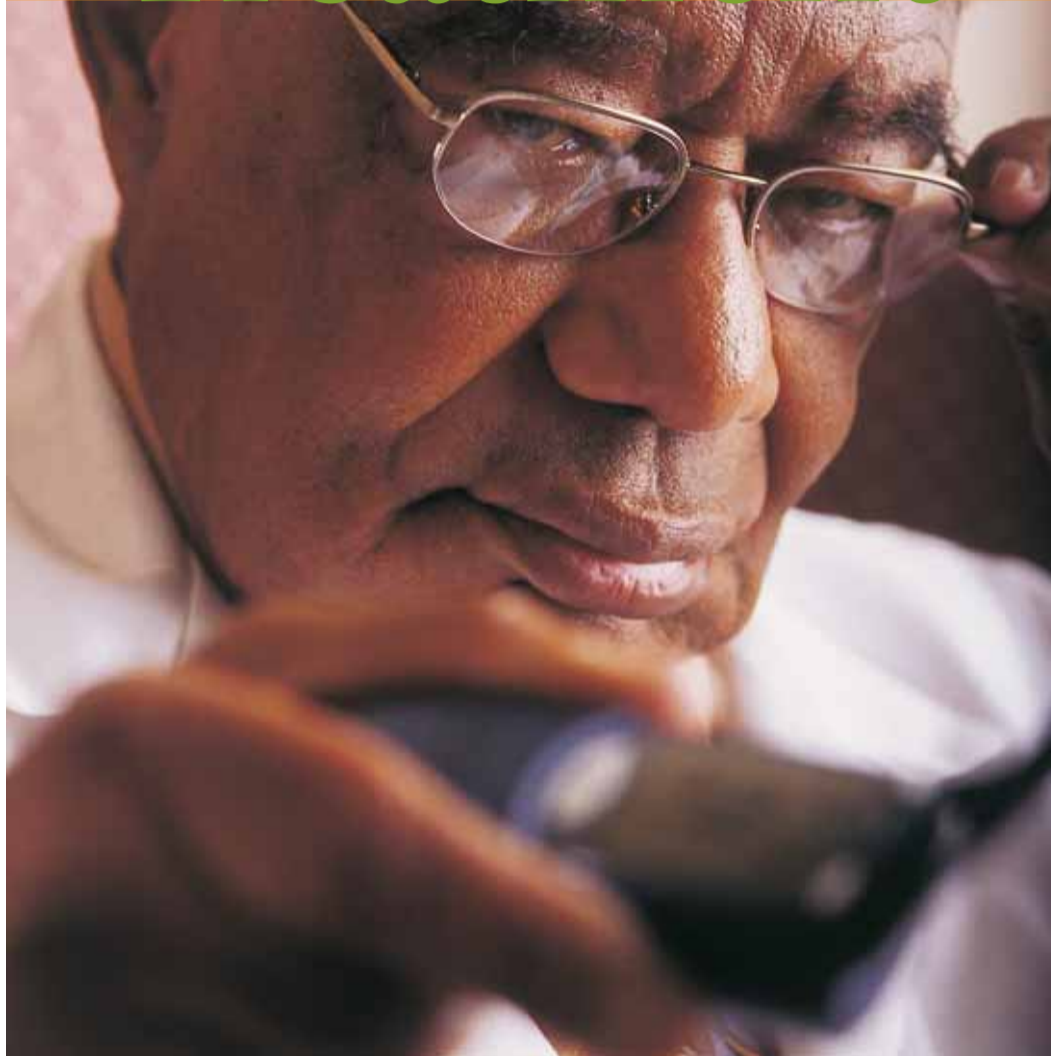
“Once you have diabetes, treatment is absolutely necessary – but so is proper diet and exercise. These are preventative actions, as well as effective treatments,” Reed said. “Medication is a second-line treatment.”

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Treatment



Diabetes

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FACT

One in four African American women over 55 years of age has diabetes.

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STAGE OF LIFE – Senior

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>1 Yom Kippur Begins (sundown) 1996: Lt. Gen. Joe Ballard becomes first black to head the Army Corps of Engineers.</p>	<p>2 2000: James Perkins Jr. sworn in as Selma, Alabama's, first African American mayor. 2005: August Wilson, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, dies.</p>	<p>3 1956: Nat "King" Cole becomes first black performer to host his own TV show.</p>	<p>4 1864: First black daily newspaper, <i>The New Orleans Tribune</i>, founded.</p>	<p>5 1872: Booker T. Washington enters Hampton Institute, Virginia.</p>	<p>6 1917: Political activist Fannie Lou Hamer born.</p>	<p>7 1934: Playwright-poet Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) born. 1993: Toni Morrison becomes the first African American to win the Nobel Prize in literature.</p>
<p>8 1941: Rev. Jesse Jackson, political activist and civil rights leader, born.</p>	<p>9 Columbus Day Observed 1888: O.B. Clare patents trestle. 2001: Dr. Ruth Simmons, first African American leader of an Ivy League institution, elected 18th president of Brown University.</p>	<p>10 1899: Isaac R. Johnson patents bicycle frame.</p>	<p>11 1887: Granville T. Woods patents telephone system and apparatus. 1887: Alexander Miles patents elevator.</p>	<p>12 1904: Physician and scholar W. Montague Cobb born.</p>	<p>13 1579: Martin de Porres, first black saint in the Roman Catholic church, born. 1876: Meharry Medical College founded, established as the Meharry Medical Department of Central Tennessee College.</p>	<p>14 1964: At age 35, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. becomes youngest man to win Nobel Peace Prize.</p>
<p>15 1991: Clarence Thomas confirmed as an associate justice of U.S. Supreme Court. 1995: The Million Man March for "A Day of Atonement" takes place in Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>16 1984: Bishop Desmond Tutu wins Nobel Peace Prize. 1995: The Million Man March for "A Day of Atonement" takes place in Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>17 1888: Capital Savings Bank of Washington, D.C., first bank for blacks, organized.</p>	<p>18 1948: Playwright Ntozake Shange, author of <i>For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Enuf</i>, born.</p>	<p>19 1943: Paul Robeson opens in <i>Othello</i> at the Shubert Theater in New York City.</p>	<p>20 1898: The first black-owned insurance company, North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co., founded.</p>	<p>21 1917: Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, pioneer of bebop, born.</p>
<p>22 1953: Clarence S. Green becomes first black certified in neurological surgery.</p>	<p>23 1947: NAACP petitions United Nations on racial conditions in the U.S.</p>	<p>24 United Nations Day 1980: Judge Patrick Higginbotham finds Republic National guilty in discrimination case. 2005: Rosa Parks, civil rights pioneer who sparked 1955 Montgomery bus boycott, dies.</p>	<p>25 1992: Toronto Blue Jays manager Cito Gaston becomes first African American to manage a team to a World Series title.</p>	<p>26 1911: Mahalia Jackson, gospel singer, born.</p>	<p>27 1891: D.B. Downing, inventor, is awarded a patent for the street letter box. 1954: Benjamin O. Davis Jr. becomes first black general in U.S. Air Force.</p>	<p>28 1981: Edward M. McIntyre elected first African American mayor of Augusta, Georgia. 1998: President Bill Clinton declares HIV/AIDS a health crisis in racial minority communities.</p>
<p>29 Daylight Saving Time Ends 1949: Alonzo G. Moron becomes first black president of Hampton Institute, Virginia.</p>	<p>30 1979: Richard Arrington elected first African American mayor of Birmingham, Alabama.</p>	<p>31 Halloween 1896: Actress, singer Ethel Waters born. 1899: William F. Burr patents switching device for railways.</p>				



Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in people 20-74 years of age.