



## **November is American Diabetes Month – *Ask, Check, & Protect***

Virgin Islands (November 10, 2009) – Did you know that there are almost 24 million Americans currently living with diabetes and that there are 57 million more who are at risk for developing the disease?

- In the Virgin Islands diabetes is the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death
- In the Virgin Islands diabetes is the second most prevalent disease trailing only hypertension.
- 8.8% of the VI population above 18 years of age have been diagnosed with diabetes
- In the VI African Americans and Hispanics have a 3.4 times higher frequency of diabetes (9.5%) compared to non-Hispanic Whites (4.7%). (BRFSS surveys 1997 & 2007)

To increase awareness of the severity of diabetes and the importance of both prevention and control, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) has called November "American Diabetes Month."

Have you or somebody you know been diagnosed with diabetes? If so, help yourself, or educate them that the following can help prevent future complications of diabetes:

### **1. Get your eyes checked every year**

*Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness among adults because it affects the blood vessels in your eyes. Identifying eye problems and treating them early can reduce your risk.*

### **2. Understand your nerves**

*Approximately 60-70% of people with diabetes have mild to severe forms of nerve damage. Nerves carry messages between your brain and your body. Nerve damage can cause hand or foot pain, sexual dysfunction, slowed digestion and can contribute to kidney damage. Ask your doctor to check your nerve function periodically to see where you stand.*

### **3. Check your feet every day**

*The rate of amputation for people with diabetes is 10 times higher than those without diabetes. Diabetes can cause poor blood flow and nerve damage in your lower legs, making you more prone to infections. By looking at your feet daily with a mirror, and having your doctor check any sores or calluses, you can avoid these severe infections that could lead to complications.*

### **4. Protect your kidneys**

*Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure. The National Kidney Foundation (NKF) estimates that 20 million Americans have early **Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)** and are unaware. Another 20 million are at an above average risk of developing it. CKD has no cure, but taking a few simple steps can drastically decrease your chance of developing late stages of CKD. Ask your doctor to test your "micro-al" level yearly. If you aren't taking one already, ask your doctor about taking an "ACE Inhibitor" or "ARB" medication, which can protect your kidneys and lower your blood pressure.*

The Virgin Islands Medical Institute Inc., (VIMI) the Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) in the Virgin Islands under contract by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) is working with doctors across the territory to delay **Chronic Kidney Disease** progression in people with diabetes and high blood pressure. VIMI is urging you to: *Ask, Check, & Protect* Diabetes and Kidney Health

The ADA is asking people across the country to pledge to *Stop Diabetes*<sup>(SM)</sup> and help confront it, fight it, and most importantly, stop it. This movement will take courage, hope, commitment and action. Join the ADA to launch this movement and visit their website at [stopdiabetes.com](http://stopdiabetes.com).

The benefits of these simple steps can add years to your life or the life of a loved one. Please join the Virgin Islands Medical Institute and the ADA to spread diabetes awareness and fight the growth and complications of diabetes during American Diabetes Month this November.