

Dementia Risk Greatest for Diabetic Native Americans & African-Americans

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By *Associate News Editor*

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Among older adults with type 2 diabetes, the risk of developing dementia was found to be higher for Native Americans and African-Americans, according to a new study.

The study, one of the first to look at racial and ethnic differences and the risk of developing dementia, also found that the lowest risk was among Asian-Americans.

The study included more than 22,000 patients aged 60 or older who were members of the Kaiser Permanente Northern California Diabetes Registry.

Dementia was diagnosed in 3,796 patients — or 17.1 percent — during a follow-up of up to 10 years. None of the patients had dementia at the start of the study, according to the researchers.

Compared to Asian-Americans, Native Americans were 64 percent more likely to develop dementia and African-Americans were 44 percent more likely.

The researchers noted that almost 20 percent — or one in five — of African-Americans and Native Americans were diagnosed with dementia during the 10-year study.

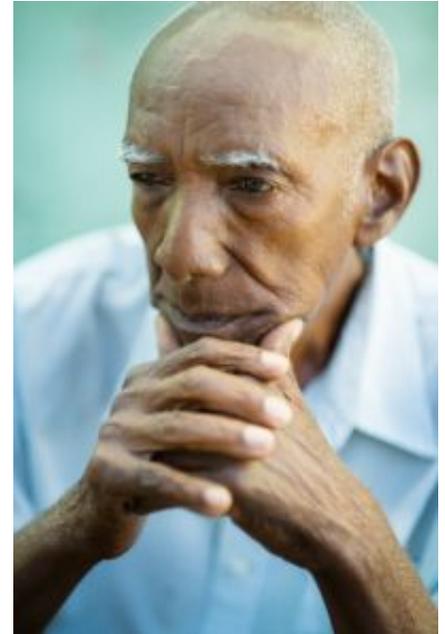
“We found that in a population of elderly individuals with type 2 diabetes there were marked differences in rates of dementia over a 10-year period by racial and ethnic groups,” said senior author Rachel Whitmer, Ph.D., a research scientist at the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research.

“Moreover, the differences were not explained by diabetes-related complications, glycemic control or duration of diabetes. Nor were they altered by factors of age, gender, neighborhood deprivation index, body mass index, or hypertension.”

People over the age of 60 who have type 2 diabetes have double the risk of developing dementia, the researchers reported.

The researchers added that certain racial and ethnic groups in the U.S., including Latinos, African-Americans, some Asian-American groups, and Native Americans, are disproportionately affected by type 2 diabetes.

“Since ethnic minorities are the fastest-growing segment of the elderly population in the United States, it is critical to determine if they are at higher risk of dementia, especially among those with type 2 diabetes,” said Elizabeth Rose Mayeda, Ph.D., lead author and postdoctoral fellow at University of California San Francisco.



“It’s eye-opening to see the magnitude of ethnic and racial differences in dementia risk in a study where everyone already has type 2 diabetes.”

The researchers concluded that more work is needed to identify factors that will reduce dementia risk for those with diabetes, particularly for ethnic and minority groups at highest risk.

While future research is needed on potential dementia prevention efforts in general, the study’s findings suggest that certain ethnic groups with type 2 diabetes may benefit the most, the researchers said.

The study was published in *Diabetes Care*.

Source: [Kaiser Permanente](#)

[Upset elderly man photo by shutterstock.](#)

APA Reference

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