Detroit has roughly 550,000 people who live in the Food Desert, a place with no or distant grocery stores, but nearby fast food options. That is over half of the city’s total population. Worse yet, those areas are far out-of-balance in terms of day-to-day food availability. This means that mainstream grocery stores are not only far from where most residents live but that “junk food” is highly concentrated all around them. Most of Detroit’s Food Desert residents are women and children.

**Why it matters:** Our research demonstrates that residents of the Food Desert are more likely to suffer and die prematurely from diet-related diseases and conditions. These effects are independent from other contributing factors such as income, race, and education. We have known for a long time that diet equals health, but recent research being conducted by medical scientists around the world goes farther, suggesting that child-bearing women have a greater propensity to pass on diet-related diseases and conditions to their offspring. This might be one reason why we see adult level diabetes increasingly affecting children.

We like to believe that in America that a motivated child can defeat all odds. But what if you have these health traits passed on before birth, intake high levels of fat and sugar but low levels of nutritious foods, and grow up sick as well as poor? In those cases, it’s typically harder to develop your full mental and physical capability. It’s harder to pay attention in school and to ultimately graduate. It’s harder to find a job and become gainfully employed. In many respects, the deck is stacked against you from the beginning.

**What communities can do:** **Get informed.** No one is above needing education and help from others to understand their “bill of health.” **Get tested.** Are you or is someone you love already diabetic or at risk of becoming diabetic sometime later in your life? Did you know that roughly 8 million US residents have diabetes right now but don’t yet know it, and that another 60 million more are at risk of developing it in the future? Diabetes, if undiagnosed or untested, could lead to serious health complications, such as heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and lower limb amputation. **Get started!** Take the first step with a caring partner. The FDA has just approved an easy self-screening kit developed by BIOSAFE. Consider hosting a diabetes screening event for your entire family, block club, public school, or church group, but make sure everyone follows up with a doctor for a full medical assessment. Only your doctor should diagnose and treat diabetes. **500 free kits have been designated for Detroit residents.** BIOSAFE is partnering with MG and the National Center for Public Research (NCPR) to make these free kits available to Detroit communities through local health partners and officials – if there is interest. We would like to hear your ideas on effective and appropriate partnerships and strategies to help diagnose and treat diabetes in Detroit. Email info@NCforPR.org for more info.