DIABETES AND YOUR EYES

Diabetes is a disease that can develop when glucose levels in your blood (also known as blood sugar) are too high. Diabetes can cause changes in your vision that range from blurry vision to permanent vision loss. The best way to prevent vision loss from diabetes if by receiving a dilated eye exam every year with your eye doctor.

Risk Factors of Diabetes
• Adults ages 45 and older
• Family history of diabetes
• High blood pressure
• Overweight/obesity
• Having excess weight
• Certain populations such as African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders have a higher chance of developing diabetes

Anatomy of the Eye
Diabetes affects the entire health of your eye. Diabetes-related eye disease mainly affects the retina (back of the eye), but can also affect the lens, optic nerve, and drainage system of your eye. Diabetes-related eye disease can make it hard to read, see signs, drive at night, and can lead to permanent vision loss.

For more information on diabetes and vision health, visit wisconsin.preventblindness.org
Our vision is for each Wisconsin resident to have healthy vision at every stage of life.

DIABETES-RELATED EYE DISEASES:

**Diabetes-Related Retinopathy**

Diabetes-Related Retinopathy occurs when small blood vessels leak and bleed in the retina. The retina is located at the back of the eye and helps you see clearly. Diabetes-related retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness in American adults. Diabetes-related retinopathy is often treated through frequent injectable drugs to maintain the health of the retina over time.

**Diabetes-Related Macular Edema**

Diabetes-Related Macular Edema occurs when small blood vessels in the center of the retina (the macula) become leaky and cause the macula to swell. Swelling can cause blurry vision, changes in color vision, or permanent vision loss. Diabetes-related macular edema is often treated with laser treatments or steroid injections to decrease swelling in the eye.

**Cataract**

Cataract is the clouding of the eyes lens. This can cause your vision to become blurry and colors to appear dull. Generally, cataracts can be treated with surgery. Besides aging, diabetes is the most common risk factor for cataracts.

**Glaucoma**

Glaucoma, “the silent thief of sight,” develops when there is too much pressure in the eye, damaging the optic nerve. Vision loss typically starts without any noticeable symptoms. If left untreated, glaucoma can lead to permanent vision loss. Once vision is lost to glaucoma it cannot be reversed. Medications and surgery may slow the disease development and progression.

You can prevent these eye diseases with a healthy lifestyle and by visiting your eye doctor every year for a dilated eye exam.
DIABETES-RELATED RETINOPATHY

Diabetes-related retinopathy affects 1 in 4 people living with diabetes. It is the number one cause of blindness in American adults. It occurs when small blood vessels leak in the retina. The retina is located at the back of the eye and helps you see clearly. To avoid vision loss from diabetes-related retinopathy, it is highly recommended people with diabetes received a dilated eye exam every year.

Symptoms of Diabetes-Related Retinopathy

- Sudden increase in eye floaters (spots or dark cobweb-like strands that appear to float in your field of vision)
- Blurry vision
- Sudden loss of vision in one eye
- Poor color vision
- Poor night vision
- Halos around lights
- Seeing flashing lights

Contact your eye doctor right away if you experience any of these symptoms.

Dilated Eye Exams

A dilated eye exam is key for people with diabetes. Dilation of the eyes is done with eye drops to widen the front of the eye, called the pupil. Dilating the pupils allows your eye doctor to see the entire back of your eye. With dilation, your eye doctor can check the retina (back of the eye), the macula (central vision), and the entire health of the eye to ensure its healthy.

How to Manage your Diabetes and Keep Your Eyes Healthy

- Visit your eye doctor every year for a dilated eye exam
- Have an A1C of 7 or below, or at a level your eye doctor recommends
- Quit smoking, work with a healthcare provider on a plan to quit
- Take your medications as prescribed
ADULT’S VISION

THE PROBLEM:

DIABETES: A RISING VISION HEALTH EPIDEMIC

DIABETES-RELATED RETINOPATHY IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AMONG WORKING-AGE ADULTS IN THE U.S.

40% OF WISCONSIN ADULTS ARE EXPECTED TO DEVELOP TYPE 2 DIABETES DURING THEIR LIFETIME

APPROXIMATELY 1 IN 3 ADULTS WITH DIABETES AGE 40 & OLDER ALREADY SHOW SOME SIGNS OF DIABETES-RELATED RETINOPATHY

AN ESTIMATED 138,000 WISCONSINITES HAVE DIABETES AND DO NOT KNOW IT

HEALTHY RETINA

DIABETES-RELATED RETINOPATHY

Sources:
Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2014.