

November is Diabetes Awareness Month

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Here's Why People With Diabetes Shouldn't Skip Eye Appointments

Things happen: appointments are forgotten, other health issues crop up, financial problems happen. But missing eye exams may be vision-threatening for patients with diabetes. The Eye Centers of Northwest Ohio joins the American Academy of Ophthalmology in reiterating the importance of eye exams during the month of November, which is observed as Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month.

Diabetes is the leading cause of preventable blindness in the United States among adults age 20 to 74 and is the fifth most common cause of preventable blindness globally. Among the 30 million Americans with diabetes, about one-third have diabetic retinopathy, the potentially blinding complication of diabetes.

People typically don't notice changes in their vision in the disease's early stages. But as it progresses, diabetic retinopathy usually causes vision loss that in many cases cannot be reversed. That's why it's so important that everyone with diabetes have yearly exams for early detection.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention consistently reports that less than two-thirds of people with diabetes undergo their recommended annual dilated eye examination. These rates are even lower among children and adolescents with diabetes, with less than half of youth with type 2 diabetes receiving an examination within six years of diagnosis.

What Is Diabetic Eye Disease?

Diabetic eye disease is a term for several eye problems that can all result from diabetes. Diabetic eye disease includes:

- Diabetic Retinopathy,
- Diabetic Macular Edema,
- Cataract, and
- Glaucoma.

Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is when blood vessels in the retina swell, leak or close off completely. Abnormal new blood vessels can also grow on the surface of the retina.

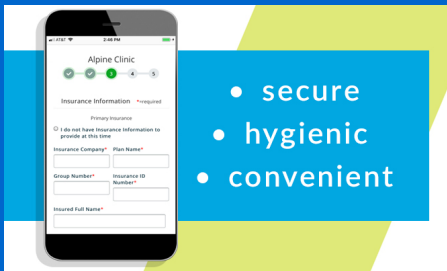
People who have diabetes or poor blood sugar control are at risk for diabetic retinopathy. Risk also increases the longer

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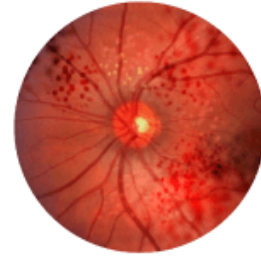
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Courtesy: The American Academy of Ophthalmology
www.aao.org/

someone has diabetes. One woman developed diabetic retinopathy after living with diabetes for 25 years.



Normal Retina



Diabetic Retina

Diabetic Macular Edema

Macular edema happens when fluid builds up on the retina and causes swelling and blurry vision. Diabetes can cause macular edema. Diabetic macular edema can lead to permanent vision loss.

Diabetes And Cataracts

Excess blood sugar from diabetes can cause cataracts. You may need cataract surgery to remove lenses that are clouded by the effects of diabetes. Maintaining good control of your blood sugar helps prevent permanent clouding of the lens and surgery.

Diabetes And Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that cause damage to your eye's optic nerve. This damage leads to irreversible loss of vision. Having diabetes doubles your chance of getting glaucoma.

What Other Eye Problems Are Related To Diabetes?

Diabetes can cause vision problems even if you do not have a form of diabetic eye disease.

If your blood sugar levels change quickly, it can affect the shape of your eye's lens, causing blurry vision. Your vision goes back to normal after your blood sugar stabilizes. Have your blood sugar controlled before getting your eyeglasses prescription checked. This ensures you receive the correct prescription.

Shopping for Christmas?



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