



Diabetes and Eye Disease The Growing Epidemic

Submitted By Kamal Kishore, MD, Retina Specialist

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a worldwide epidemic. Changing dietary patterns, the trend toward obesity, and a sedentary lifestyle appear to play a major role in the increasing incidence of DM. An estimated 25.8 million people or 8.3 percent of the U.S. population have diabetes. Of those, 7 million are undiagnosed. An additional 79 million Americans are currently classified as pre-diabetes with higher than normal blood glucose levels.

Classes of Diabetes

- **Type 1** or insulin deficient, was previously called insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) or juvenile-onset diabetes. It accounts for about 5 percent of all diagnosed cases.

- **Type 2** or insulin resistant, was previously called non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM) or adult-onset diabetes. It accounts for about 90–95 percent of all diagnosed cases.
- **Gestational diabetes** is diagnosed during pregnancy.
- **Other types**, include diabetes induced by surgery, medications, infections, and pancreatic disease account for 1–5 percent of all diagnosed cases.

Diabetes and Blindness

People with diabetes are 25 times more likely to go blind, and African-Americans, Latinos, and southeast Asians with diabetes are at an even higher risk. Studies have shown that most cases of blindness could be pre-

vented by a regular dilated eye exam and early treatment.

Between 40–45 percent of all people with diabetes have diabetic retinopathy, an eye disease that damages the blood vessels of the retina. Diabetic retinopathy does not present symptoms until the damage to the eyes is severe. Having a dilated eye exam yearly can detect the disease in the early stages.

Diabetic Eye Exams

At Illinois Retina Institute, diabetic eye exams are performed by a retina specialist and the results are reviewed and given immediately. This comprehensive dilated eye exam may determine whether an individual has a retinal problem associated with macular degeneration as well.

Chronic Complications of Diabetes

Complications from diabetes are a result of damage to either the large blood vessels (heart attack, stroke, poor circulation in legs), or the smaller vessels (eye disease, kidney damage, and nerve damage).

The key to decreasing diabetic complications starts with strict blood sugar control. The best indicator of glycemic control is hemoglobin A1C, which reflects the average blood sugar level for the preceding two to three months. A value less than 6.5 is considered excellent control. Other factors such as low cholesterol, maintaining a healthy weight, and controlling high blood pressure also help to decrease diabetic complications.

Prevention or Delay of Type 2 Diabetes

The Diabetes Prevention Program found that diet and exercise, and certain medications can significantly decrease the risk of progression of pre-diabetes to diabetes.

Illinois Retina Institute is located at the following locations: 5016 N. University St., Ste. 106, Peoria IL 61614, phone: 309-589-1880; 3602 Marquette Rd, Peru IL 61354, phone: 815-223-7400; and 3315 N. Seminary St., Galesburg IL 61401, phone: 877-223-7403. Visit our website: www.illinoisretinainstitute.com.

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