

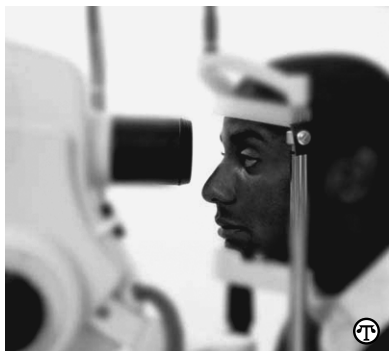
Diabetes & You

Eye Exam A Big Part Of Diabetes Detection

(NAPSA)—As U.S. waistlines expand, so does the number of people diagnosed with diabetes. In fact, more than 17 million people have diabetes and one-third do not know they have it. Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for 90 to 95 percent of all cases of diabetes, can cause changes in vision and, in extreme cases, blindness. The American Optometric Association (AOA) strongly encourages individuals to have regular, comprehensive eye examinations because optometrists can serve as the first line of detection for diabetes.

“Optometrists also evaluate eye health by putting drops in the eyes so that the pupils become dilated. This allows me to actually see into the eyes through the pupils,” said AOA president Dr. Richard L. Wallingford. “When looking inside the eye at the retina, an optometrist can see the blood vessels directly. The eye is the only place on the body that blood vessels can be seen without having to look through skin or tissue.” As a result, optometrists can detect many diseases that affect our blood vessels. **Early detection of diabetes is critical in maintaining healthy vision.**

In addition to older age, obesity and physical inactivity, other diabetes risk factors include a family history of the disease, medical history of gestational diabetes, and impaired glucose tolerance. Beyond that, here are some ways to reduce the risk of diabetes from developing:



A comprehensive eye exam is a major step in detecting diabetes.

- Maintain a healthy diet and exercise regularly.
- Get high blood pressure under control. High blood pressure can make eye problems worse by increasing damage to blood vessels.
- Keep blood sugar levels under tight control. High blood sugar causes damage to blood vessels. For eyes, this can mean damage to blood vessels in the retina and quite possibly changes in fluid pressure and clouding of the lens.
- Quit smoking.
- See an optometrist if your vision becomes blurry, you have trouble reading signs or books, you see double, you feel pressure in your eyes, straight lines do not look straight or your side vision is limited.

Healthy vision doesn't happen by accident. Regular eye exams are essential in maintaining eye health and can also contribute to good overall health.