

Health Bulletin



Helping People With Diabetes See Clearly

(NAPSA)—Vision loss can be prevented in people with diabetes.

Still, millions of Americans with the condition face potential complications, including permanent blindness due to diabetic retinopathy, which affects 5.3 million American adults.



**Jose S.
Pulido**

Doctors say that number could be significantly reduced if diabetics got regular eye exams. In fact, the American Academy of Ophthalmology says vision loss can be prevented if the disease is diagnosed and treated in time. The group helps spread the word during Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month in November.

“Only 50 to 60 percent of those with diabetes get the recommended yearly eye examinations,” said Jose S. Pulido, M.D., Academy clinical correspondent and professor of ophthalmology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. “Studies show effective treatments, including an annual dilated eye exam, can reduce severe vision loss by up to 94 percent.”

According to the American Diabetes Association, 20.8 million Americans have diabetes. While an estimated 14.6 million have been diagnosed, 6.2 million people are unaware that they have the disease.

“This is a tragedy waiting to happen because people who are unaware they have the disease are at a substantially greater risk for vision loss and other complications,” said Dr. Pulido. “The first step in preventing complications is finding out if you have the disease. It’s important for all healthy adults over the age of 45 to have a blood sugar test once every three years.”

Signs of Diabetic Retinopathy

“Fluctuations in blood sugar levels can temporarily affect vision, so it’s sometimes difficult to know if a serious eye problem is developing,” said Dr. Pulido. “If you notice a vision change in one eye, a change that lasts more than a day or two, or changes not associated with fluctuations in blood sugar, contact your Eye M.D. immediately.”

Other ways to reduce the risk of eye disease:

- Keep your blood glucose level as close to normal as possible through diet, exercise and, if needed, medication
- Keep your blood pressure under control
- Keep your cholesterol low
- Don’t smoke
- Make sure your hemoglobin A1c levels (a measure of good blood sugar control) are measured at least every four months and are less than 7.1.

For more information, visit www.aaio.org.