

Health Awareness

Protecting Your Vision From Diabetes

(NAPSA)—Diabetes kills more Americans each year than AIDS and breast cancer combined—and can cause serious problems throughout the body. According to the National Eye Institute, eye health, for example, can become critically compromised.

Around 30.3 million Americans, or 9.4 percent of the population, are living with diabetes, with about 1.5 million more being diagnosed every year. The longer someone has diabetes, the greater his or her chances are of developing diabetic retinopathy, or damage to the blood vessels in the retina. According to the National Eye Institute, between 40 and 45 percent of people diagnosed with diabetes have some degree of diabetic retinopathy.

While being overweight and leading a sedentary lifestyle are certainly linked to diabetes, social and environmental factors such as poverty, stress, and lack of safe housing and access to a healthy diet can also compromise your health and ultimately contribute to the development of type 2 diabetes. According to America's Health Insurance Plans, addressing these social determinants of health has become a top priority for Medicaid programs.

"We encourage our members with diabetes to have regular eye exams to rule out complications," said Dr. Andrea Gelzer, senior vice president of medical affairs at AmeriHealth Caritas, a national leader in Medicaid managed care and other health care solutions for those most



People with diabetes would be wise to see their way clear to getting regular eye exams.

in need. "We educate our members so they understand that living a healthy lifestyle, controlling their blood sugar and having regular eye exams can help save their vision."

Simple steps can help mitigate the effects of diabetes and may potentially delay complications from diabetic eye disease, including controlling your blood sugar and blood pressure, monitoring your cholesterol, seeing your doctor regularly, and having a dilated eye exam at least once per year—or more if recommended by your eye care professional.

AmeriHealth Caritas is part of the Independence Health Group in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and one of the nation's leaders in health care solutions for those most in need.

Learn More

For further information, visit www.amerihhealthcaritas.com.