



## Simple Eye Exam Could Help Save The Sight Of People With Diabetes

(NAPSA)—Surprising new survey reveals that people with diabetes are unaware they need an exam that could protect their vision.

For many people, having diabetes means more than regulating blood sugar levels—it also means facing a variety of other health problems and complications that can be overwhelming and difficult to prioritize. Everyone with diabetes is at risk for diabetic macular edema (DME), an eye condition that can cause permanent vision loss.<sup>1</sup>

A simple retina (dilated) eye exam can prevent most cases of vision loss due to diabetes.<sup>1,2</sup> Yet, a surprising new survey suggests people are not taking action against the “unseen risk” of diabetes on their eyesight.

According to a survey of 1,674 Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes patients via Diabetic Connect, the world’s largest online social network for people and families living with diabetes, one in four people with diabetes do not receive the recommended annual retina (dilated) eye exam—causing them to miss out on the chance to catch the condition early and potentially stop the damage before it worsens.<sup>3</sup>

If you or someone you love is living with diabetes and needs to protect their sight, these tips can help:

1. Know Your Vital Numbers
2. Talk to a Healthcare Professional Before There is a Problem
3. Get an Annual Retina (Dilated) Eye Exam

So why aren’t people getting retina eye exams annually?

- They think they aren’t at risk: 36 percent of people with diabetes surveyed reported that they had only spoken with their doctor about vision loss when they were first told they had diabetes<sup>3</sup>

- They just didn’t know: 32 percent reported they didn’t know they needed a retina (dilated) eye exam<sup>3</sup>

- Nobody told them: 21 percent reported they had never had a conversation with their physician about the risks of vision loss from diabetes<sup>3</sup>

### The Problem

DME can cause permanent vision loss, which can inflict a



**People with diabetes in particular would be wise to get their eyes checked regularly.**

financial burden on people, particularly workers who depend on good vision.<sup>1</sup> In fact, a recent study of commercial drivers found the health benefit costs for people with DME are three times higher compared to people without diabetes and they are more likely to miss days of work annually compared to those that are unaffected by the condition.<sup>4</sup>

“People need to know about this. We need people to stay working, keep their jobs. I lost mine because I lost my vision. My husband is the only one who works now. If he loses his job, we will have nothing.”—Commercial Truck Driver

### Who is at risk for DME?

There are approximately 26 million people living with diabetes in the United States. DME can progress quickly and cause damage to the eyes at any time, often without any initial signs or symptoms. More than 560,000 Americans have the condition. Yet approximately 55 percent are unaware that they have it.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, according to the survey from Diabetic Connect, more than half of respondents didn’t know that DME is a leading cause of vision loss for people with diabetes.<sup>3,6</sup>

### Vision is Worth Protecting

Taking action early can help prevent permanent vision loss. The first step is to get a retina (dilated) eye exam each year by a retina specialist.

To find out more about vision loss from diabetes, learn the importance of a retina (dilated) eye exam, or to locate a local retina specialist, visit: [diabeteseyecheck.org](http://diabeteseyecheck.org).

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> WebMD. *The Risks and Complications of Uncontrolled Diabetes*. Available at: <http://diabetes.webmd.com/risks-complications-uncontrolled-diabetes>. Accessed July 26, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control. *Can't See Clearly? Get Your Eyes Checked*. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HealthyVision/>. Accessed July 26, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Data on file. Alliance Health Eye Dilation Survey, May 14, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Brook RA, et al. *How Does Diabetic Eye Disease Affect the American Worker? (Trucker)* [Poster]. The 73rd Scientific Sessions of the American Diabetes Association (ADA), Chicago, IL; June 21–25, 2013 (accepted for presentation).

<sup>5</sup> Bressler NM, Varma R, Doan Q, et al. *Prevalence of Visual Impairment from Diabetic Macular Edema and Relationship to Eye Care from the 2005–2008 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)* [abstract]. The Retina Society 45th Annual Scientific Meetings, Washington, DC; October 4–7, 2012 (accepted for presentation).

<sup>6</sup> American Academy of Ophthalmology. *What is Diabetic Retinopathy?* Available at: <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/diabetic-retinopathy.cfm>. Accessed August 27, 2013.