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Those with Diabetes at Higher Risk for Vision Loss, But Steps Can Be Taken to Save Sight

-Prevent Blindness Provides Free Educational Materials as Part of November's Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month-

CHICAGO (Oct. 25, 2017) – More than 8 million Americans have diabetic retinopathy, according to the study, "[The Future of Vision: Forecasting the Prevalence and Costs of Vision Problems](#)," from Prevent Blindness. As the rates of diabetes cases grow across the country, so do the projected rates of diabetic eye disease, with a 35 percent increase to 10.9 million by 2032, and a 63 percent increase to 13.2 million by 2050.

The study also found that, unlike other eye diseases such as cataract, glaucoma and macular degeneration, more men than women have diabetic retinopathy. And, Hispanic populations are projected to exhibit extremely high growth in diabetic retinopathy cases. Currently, 67 percent of cases are among whites and 17 percent among Hispanics. By 2050, projections are that 45 percent of diabetic retinopathy patients will be white and 35 percent will be Hispanic.

Prevent Blindness has declared November as Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month to help educate the public on the effects of diabetes on vision, types of diabetic eye disease, risk factors and treatment options. Prevent Blindness offers a variety of free resources dedicated to the education of diabetic eye disease including its dedicated website, preventblindness.org/diabetes.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults. And, the [National Eye Institute](#) states that people with diabetes are 25 times more likely to become blind than those without diabetes.

All people with diabetes are at risk of developing eye disease that can permanently damage their vision and even lead to blindness. However, there are steps that can be taken to help prevent diabetic eye disease, including:

- Maintaining good blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol control.
- Getting a comprehensive dilated eye exam and/or obtaining retinal photographs that are examined by an eye doctor, at least once a year, or more often as recommended by the eye doctor.

- Women with diabetes prior to pregnancy should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam early in their pregnancy. The eye doctor may recommend additional exams during pregnancy.
- Keeping a healthy lifestyle that includes exercising regularly, not smoking and following a healthy diet. Talk to a dietician about eating habits and a doctor before starting an exercise program.

“Diabetes is a very serious chronic condition that can cause damage to many parts of the body, including the eyes,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “The good news is that by taking the necessary steps to manage the condition, including getting an annual eye exam, we help to limit the harmful impact that diabetes may have.”

For more information on diabetic eye disease, please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or visit preventblindness.org/diabetes.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call (800) 331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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