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Millions with Diabetes and Prediabetes at Higher Risk for Losing Vision, Blindness

-Prevent Blindness Offers Free Informational Resources as Part of November's Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month-

CHICAGO (Oct. 24, 2018) –Today, [according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), more than 100 million adults in the United States are now living with diabetes or prediabetes, a condition that if not treated, often leads to type 2 diabetes within five years. One of the many damaging effects that diabetes can have is on vision. Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults.

November has been declared by [Prevent Blindness](#) as Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month to educate the public on the effects of diabetes on vision, risk factors and treatment options. Prevent Blindness offers a variety of free resources dedicated to the education of diabetic eye disease at preventblindness.org/diabetes.

Diabetes is a chronic condition that occurs when blood sugar levels are constantly high that can cause serious health complications, including heart disease, kidney failure, nerve damage, and blindness. The [National Eye Institute](#) states that people with diabetes are 25 times more likely to become blind than those without diabetes. Additionally, African Americans suffer a 40 percent higher frequency of severe visual impairment caused by diabetic retinopathy as compared with Whites, and twice the rate of blindness.

Diabetic eye disease refers to a group of eye problems that people with diabetes may face as a complication of this disease including:

- **Diabetic retinopathy** – A leading cause of blindness in American adults, it is caused by damage to the small blood vessels of the retina - the seeing layer of the eye.
- **Diabetic macular edema (DME)** – A complication of diabetes caused by leaking blood vessels, which leads to fluid accumulation in the macula, the center of the retina used for central vision. DME can cause central vision to become blurry.
- **Cataract** – The clouding of the lens in the eye, which blocks or changes the passage of light into the eye. Cataracts can cause vision to become blurry.
- **Glaucoma** – Optic nerve damage and possible loss of side vision, usually caused by increase in fluid pressure inside the eye.

“The number of diabetes cases continues to increase, and the condition is hitting people at a much younger age than ever before, which means more cases of permanent vision loss to millions across the country,” said Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “We encourage everyone to get routine dilated eye exam, and those with diabetes to do so annually, so that eye doctors are given a chance to detect, treat and limit the damaging effects to vision.”

For more information on diabetic eye disease, please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or visit preventblindness.org/diabetes. For a free listing of organizations and services that provide financial assistance for vision care in English or Spanish, please visit <https://www.preventblindness.org/vision-care-financial-assistance-information>.

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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