



Esse Health e-Newsletter Article

The Importance of Diabetic Eye Exams

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Keeping yourself healthy if you have diabetes includes focusing on many aspects of preventive and proactive care. This includes comprehensive eye care. Currently diabetes is the leading cause of blindness. Fortunately, you can do something about this because most eye problems are treatable if detected early. Let us take a look at some potential eye problems and how to spot them, so you can get the treatment you need.

One of the most serious complications associated with diabetes is retinopathy. Diabetic retinopathy occurs when blood vessels in the back of the eye become fragile and bleed easily. This is significant because the retina's function is to sense light and transmit images to the brain. When these vessels are damaged, the images being transmitted to the brain appear distorted. Diabetic retinopathy takes years to develop. Since there are no early warning signs, individuals with diabetes at the age 30 or older, should have their eyes examined within a few months of being diagnosed and every year thereafter. Treatment of retinopathy will not cure the condition, but it is essential to prevent any further vision loss.

Diabetes may cause visual disturbance, even if there is no evidence of retinopathy. Frequent changes in blood sugar levels will result in an altered shape of the eye's lens, which gives images on the retina an appearance of being "out of focus." Sometimes the first symptom of diabetes is blurred vision, due to elevated blood sugars. Keeping the lens healthy is one of the reasons it is imperative to keep blood sugars under control to help limit episodes of blurred or distorted vision.

Individuals with diabetes may develop other conditions such as cataracts, which are a permanent clouding of the eye lens, or floaters which tend to only temporarily affect one's vision. Another problem that affects diabetics is macular edema. This is a swelling of the eye nerves that may cause lifelong damage to one's eyesight. Abnormal functioning of

eye muscle nerves can cause double vision. Anyone who experiences double vision should consult with an eye doctor as soon as symptoms develop to make sure that there is not a more serious underlying problem taking place. Fortunately, cataracts can be corrected with surgery. If detected before too much damage occurs, diabetic retinopathy and macular edema may be halted with the aid of laser therapy.

With today's technologies and improved methods of diagnosing and treating eye problems, most individuals with diabetes can keep good vision. Proper education about how seriously diabetes may affect vision, maintaining great control of blood sugars and regular eye exams by an eye doctor are the best ways to keep you "looking good."

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