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Prevent Blindness Texas
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Diabetes, the Leading Cause of New Cases of Blindness, Projected to Increase Diabetic Eye Disease Numbers 35 Percent in Near Future

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

HOUSTON (Oct. 28, 2015) – According to a recent study from Prevent Blindness, more than 8 million Americans have diabetic retinopathy with total cases projected to increase by 35 percent by 2032, and by 63 percent by 2050. Diabetic retinopathy patients have an average age of 66 years, the youngest of any of the major eye diseases. And, individuals with diabetes are 25 times more likely to become blind than those without diabetes, according to the National Eye Institute.

Prevent Blindness has declared November to be Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month in order to help educate the public on diabetes prevention strategies, potential risk factors, treatment options and Medicare coverage policies.

Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults. People with diabetes are 40 percent more likely to develop glaucoma and 60 percent more likely to develop cataracts than those without diabetes. If diabetes is detected and treated early, the blinding effects can be lessened.

“Prevent Blindness urges everyone with diabetes to get an annual dilated eye exam,” said Debbie Goss, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness Texas. “Your eye doctor can help monitor your vision and advise you of the necessary steps to take today to help lessen the impact that the disease may have on your sight.”

Anyone with diabetes is at risk of developing diabetic eye disease that can permanently damage their vision and even lead to blindness. There are certain factors that can put some at higher risk for vision loss, including:

- Age—Both younger and older people with diabetes are at risk for diabetic retinopathy. Some of the most severe cases of diabetic retinopathy occur in people who were diagnosed with diabetes at a very young age after they have had the disease for many years.

- Duration of the Disease—The longer a person has diabetes, the greater the chance of diabetic retinopathy. Nearly all people with type 1 diabetes and more than 60 percent of people with type 2 diabetes have diabetic retinopathy in the
first 20 years of living with the disease.

- **Blood Sugar Control**—Poor blood sugar control is one of the main causes of diabetic retinopathy. If you have diabetes, you can lower the risk of vision loss by carefully monitoring and controlling blood sugar levels.

- **Ethnicity**—According to the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](https://www.aao.org), certain ethnic groups are at higher risk because they are more likely to have diabetes. These include African Americans, Hispanic and Native Americans.

- **Hypertension**—High blood pressure increases the risk of eye disease, as well as heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. It may be necessary to change diet and exercise habits or take medication to keep blood pressure under control.

- **Pregnancy**—While scientists are still unsure why, pregnancy seems to increase a woman's risk of developing, or accelerating, diabetic retinopathy. Pregnant women with diabetes should see their eye doctor during their pregnancy.

- **Renal Disease**—Kidney disease is a major complication of diabetes. The earlier kidney disease is diagnosed the better. Individuals with diabetes must have their urine tested regularly for early signs of kidney disease.

Prevent Blindness offers a variety of free resources dedicated to the education of diabetic eye disease including its dedicated website, [preventblindness.org/diabetes](http://preventblindness.org/diabetes). In addition, community health educators, outreach workers, public health personnel, senior center program directors, and employers can utilize the “Healthy Eyes Educational Series, Adult Vision Problems Module,” that covers signs and symptoms, risk factors, and treatment options for diabetic retinopathy, cataract and glaucoma. It can easily be downloaded for any presentation purposes at [preventblindness.org/healthy-eyes-educational-series](http://preventblindness.org/healthy-eyes-educational-series).

For more information on diabetic eye disease, the “Healthy Eyes Educational Series, Adult Vision Problems Module,” or other eye health information, please call Prevent Blindness at 1-888-98-SIGHT or visit [www.preventblindnesstexas.org](http://www.preventblindnesstexas.org).

**About Prevent Blindness Texas**

Founded in 1956, Prevent Blindness is the state’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 Texas touches the lives of thousands of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the Texas public. Through a network of regional offices and volunteers, we are committed to eliminating preventable blindness in Texas. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-888-98-SIGHT or visit us on our [website](http://preventblindness.org), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/preventblindness), or [Twitter](https://twitter.com/preventblindness).

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