

# EARLY DETECTION AND TREATMENT CAN PREVENT VISION LOSS RELATED TO DIABETES

## Cigna Vision

Regardless of your age or physical health, it is important for everyone to have regular eye exams. During a complete eye exam, your eye doctor will check your eyes for common eye diseases such as diabetic retinopathy. Diabetic retinopathy, a diabetes-related eye disease, is the leading cause of new cases of blindness among adults 18 or older.<sup>1</sup>

Even if you haven't been diagnosed with diabetes, you may still be at risk. Of the nearly 29.1 million American children and adults affected by diabetes, about 28%, or nearly 8.1 million are unaware that they have the disease.<sup>1</sup> A regular eye exam can help detect diabetic retinopathy years before the first medical sign of diabetes. Early diagnosis and treatment are important in diabetic eye disease because intervention can prevent vision loss and blindness.

### Below are some facts about Diabetic Retinopathy:<sup>2</sup>

- **No warning signs** – You may not experience symptoms until your vision is already damaged.
- **Who's at risk** – Several factors influence whether you get retinopathy:
  - Blood sugar control – High blood sugar levels can damage the tiny blood vessels of the retina.
  - Blood pressure level – High blood pressure can cause more damage to the weakened vessels in your eye.
  - How long you have had diabetes.
  - Genes
- **Vision loss and blindness** – Diabetic retinopathy usually affects both of your eyes by damaging your retina- the light sensitive tissue at the back of your eye. Over time, the blood vessels protecting your retina become blocked causing vision blurriness or loss. If left untreated, it could ultimately lead to blindness.
- **Comprehensive eye exams are crucial** – A dilated eye exam allows your eye care doctor to notice the early warning signs for this disease and prevent

vision loss. Timely treatment and appropriate follow-up care can reduce your risk of blindness.

- **Treatment options vary** – Your eye care doctor can provide advice on treatment options to either stop or slow down the disease.
- **An eye exam by an eye specialist** (ophthamologist or optometrist) is the only way to detect diabetic retinopathy.

Whether or not you have symptoms, early detection and timely treatment can help save your sight. Schedule an exam today!

### Did you know?

- The longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to develop diabetic retinopathy, especially if your diabetes is poorly controlled.
- Can diabetic retinopathy be prevented? You can lower your chance of damaging small blood vessels in the eye by keeping your blood sugar levels and blood pressure levels within a target range. If you smoke, quit. All of this reduces the risk of damage to the retina.

1. "Statistics About Diabetes" American Diabetes Association, May 2015, <<http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/statistics/>>.

2. Cigna Wellness and Medical Topics: Diabetic Retinopathy. May 2015. <<http://www.cigna.com/healthwellness/hw/medical-topics/diabetic-retinopathy-tf1308>>

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