

Discoveries Thru Vision
Diabetes
By John M. Nevelow, OD

November is National Diabetic Month. This is to remind everyone that we need to be aware of diabetes and its visual and systemic effects every month, not just in November. Diabetes is the leading cause of new blindness in Americans under the age of 74. It is a leading cause of renal disease and non-traumatic amputations. It is one of the leading causes of death mainly due to its cardiovascular complications.

It is estimated that diabetes will triple in the United States in the next 30 years. Hispanics and blacks can expect the largest increase especially older than 65 years of age. There are many reasons associated with the increase in diabetes. Some of these are increasing obesity, diets with high calories, sedentary lifestyles and genetic influences.

There are two main types of diabetes. Type I is generally diagnosed younger than 30 years old with the average about 15 years old. This is due to Insulin deficiency usually starting shortly after birth and increasing until symptoms develop. Insulin injections are the treatment of choice.

Type II which is the most common are generally diagnosed over the age of 30. However, the number has increased dramatically under the age of 20. There has been an increase in children mainly due to obesity. This type is usually controlled with a variety of oral medications, diet and exercise. Regardless of the type of diabetes one has, the effects on the body and eyes are similar. Cardiovascular, kidney, Alzheimer's disease, cancers of the pancreas, intestines, breast and esophagus, bone and joint disease, periodontal diseases are just a few. The effects on our eyes can be associated with an increase in cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, retinal hemorrhages, retinal detachments and vision fluctuations. The ocular muscles can be affected causing double vision.

Diabetes can be detected and followed by routine annual eye exams. Our doctors have the ability through dilated ocular exams and photographs to monitor our patient's development and progress of their diabetic retinopathy. We co-manage with our patients physicians the effects of diabetes in our eyes. Your physician wants an annual retinal exam to help them determine if their treatment and management are working. What is happening in your eyes is occurring in every organ in your body.

This is one more reason why regular eye exams are necessary. Don't wait until your vision is changing to be seen. Our doctors have over 35 years of combined experience in co-managing patients with eye health problems.

If you have any question on this topic or any other eye health questions please call Drs. John and Erin Nevelow at (210) 349-2437 or email us at www.drjnevelow.com