

# November is Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month

*Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in working-age Americans. During the month of November, we will be sharing news and information to increase awareness and encourage patients to seek treatment of vision problems related to Diabetes.*

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, approximately 29 million Americans age 20 or older have diabetes, but almost one-third don't know they have the disease and are at risk for vision loss and other health problems.

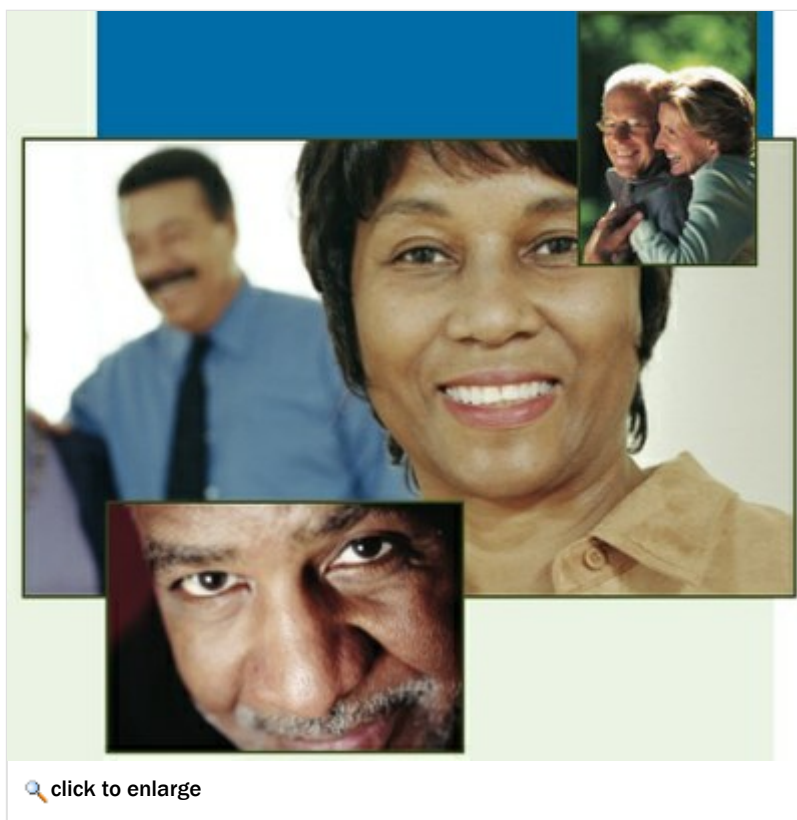
Early symptoms are often unnoticed, therefore vision may not be affected until the disease is severe and less easily treated.

Diabetic eye disease, a group of eye problems that affects those with diabetes, includes diabetic retinopathy, cataracts and glaucoma. The most common of these is **diabetic retinopathy**, which affects 5.3 million Americans age 18 and older.

Diabetic retinopathy is a potentially blinding condition in which the blood vessels inside the retina become damaged from the high blood sugar levels associated with diabetes. This leads to fluids leaking into the retina and obstructing blood flow. Both may cause severe vision loss.

Once you are diagnosed with diabetes, **schedule a complete dilated eye examination with your UNC Eye M.D.** at least once a year by calling 919-966-5509. Make an appointment promptly if you experience blurred vision and/or floaters that:

- Affect only one eye;
- Last more than a few days;
- Are not associated with a change in blood sugar.



Diabetes can also affect your vision by causing cataracts and glaucoma. If you have diabetes, you may get cataracts at a younger age, and your chances of developing glaucoma are doubled.

Early diagnosis of diabetes and, most importantly, maintaining strict control of blood sugar and hypertension through diet, exercise and medication, can help reduce your risk of developing eye disease associated with diabetes.

The following UNC Eye Care M.D.'s specialize in diabetic retinopathy:

- **Travis A. Meredith, M.D.**, Professor & Past Chairman
- **Maurice B. Landers, M.D.**, Professor
- **Sai H. Chavala, M.D.**, Associate Professor
- **Seema Garg, M.D.**, Associate Professor
- **Odette M. Houghton, M.D.**, Associate Professor
- **J. Niklas Ulrich, M.D.**, Assistant Professor