

HEALTH

Don't Lose Sight of Diabetic Eye Disease

Early detection and medical care can reduce risks

Thousands of American adults are at risk of losing their vision as a result of complications from diabetes.

Diabetes affects nearly 26 million people in the United States. In addition, another 79 million people are estimated to have pre-diabetes, a condition that puts people at increased risk for diabetes. All people with diabetes, both type 1 and type 2, are at risk for diabetic eye disease, a leading cause of vision loss and blindness.

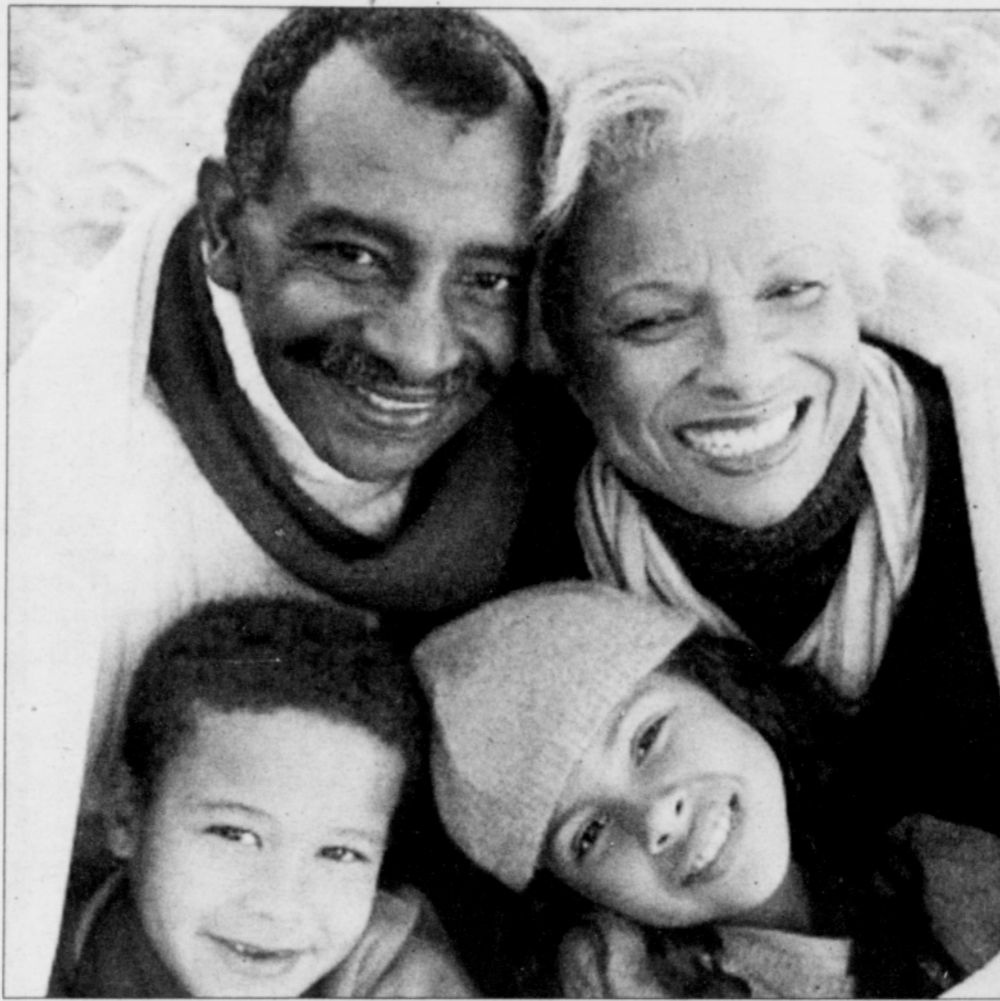
"The longer a person has diabetes the greater is his or her risk of developing diabetic eye disease," said Dr. Suber Huang, chair of the Diabetic Eye Disease Subcommittee for the National Eye Institute's National Eye Health Education Program. "If you have diabetes, be sure to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year. Diabetic eye disease often has no early

warning signs, but can be detected early and treated before noticeable vision loss occurs."

Diabetic eye disease refers to a group of eye problems that people with diabetes may face as a complication of the disease, including diabetic retinopathy, cataract, and glaucoma.

Diabetic retinopathy, the most common diabetic eye disease, is the leading cause of blindness in adults 20 to 74 years of age. According to the National Eye Institute, 4.1 million people have diabetic eye disease, and its prevalence is projected to increase to 7.2 million by 2020.

While all people with diabetes can develop diabetic eye disease, African Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Hispanics, and older adults with diabetes are at higher risk of losing vision or going blind from it.



Clinical research has shown that maintaining good control of blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol can slow the development and progression of diabetic eye disease.

All people with diabetes should have a dilated eye exam at least once a year to detect vision problems

early. In fact, with early detection, timely laser surgery, and appropriate follow-up care, people with ad-

vanced diabetic retinopathy can reduce their risk of blindness by 90 percent. Clinical research has shown that maintaining good control of blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol can slow the development and progression of diabetic eye disease. In addition to regular dilated eye exams, people with diabetes should do the following to keep their health on track:

Take your medications; reach and maintain a healthy weight; add physical activity to your daily routine; control your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol; and kick the smoking habit.

"Don't lose sight of diabetic eye disease," added Dr. Huang. "Don't wait until you notice an eye problem to have an exam because vision that is lost often cannot be restored."

For more information on diabetic eye disease and tips on finding an eye care professional or financial assistance for eye care, visit nei.nih.gov/diabetes or call the National Eye Institute at 301-496-5248.

Height Loss and Health Risks

Study looks at impact on older women

Most of us grow shorter as we age and some height loss is normal, but a new study by Kaiser Permanente researchers in Portland, found that women who lose two inches or more are at greater risk for fractures and death.

The study found that women 65 and older who lost more than two inches over 15 years were 50 percent more likely to both fracture a bone and to die in the subsequent five years, compared to women who lost less than two inches in height.

Height loss may be an indicator of

osteoporosis, a weakening of the bone that can lead to fractures of the spine, hip, wrist and other bones. Hip fractures are the most debilitating.

Nearly 300,000 people are admitted to the hospital each year with a hip fracture, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As many as 20 percent of them will die within a year after the fracture and many others will become disabled, previous research has shown.

"We need to do everything we can to prevent these fractures and our study suggests that clinicians don't need to wait until they have two height measurements before they can be proactive," Hillier said. "Most older women remember how tall they were in their mid 20s, and if

they measure two inches shorter than that, clinicians should consider bone density testing, coun-

seling, and possible treatment to help prevent fractures."

Prior studies have reported that significant height loss puts men at higher risk for heart disease and death, but this is the first study to

find an association between height loss and death in women. Another study found that men over 70 who lost two inches or more were also at greater risk for fracturing a hip, compared with men who lost less height.

Study Proves Colonoscopy Benefit

(AP) — Millions of people have endured a colonoscopy, believing the dreaded exam may help keep them from dying of colon cancer. For the first time, a major study offers clear evidence that it does.

Removing precancerous growths spotted during the test can cut the risk of dying from colon cancer in half, the study suggests. Doctors have long assumed a benefit, but research hasn't shown before that removing polyps would improve

survival — the key measure of any cancer screening's worth.

Some people skip the test because of the unpleasant steps needed to get ready for it.

"Sure, it's a pain in the neck. People complain to me all the time, 'It's horrible. It's terrible,'" said Dr. Sidney Winawer, a gastroenterologist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York who helped lead the study. "But look at the alternative."

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