

JOEL FUHRMAN, MD

Preserve your vision: prevent diabetes

Diabetes is a serious disease that poses considerable risks to the vascular system, particularly to the crucial and delicate blood vessels of the eyes. Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in adults.

Nonrefractive visual impairment refers to a visual defect that cannot be corrected with glasses, and diabetic retinopathy is a common cause of non-refractive visual impairment.

Retinopathy is quite common among diabetics; about one-third of diabetics over the age of 40 have diabetic retinopathy.

Retinopathy can lead to serious vision loss, preventing sufferers from driving and living independently.

A study has uncovered an alarming upward trend in non-refractive visual impairment, and provides evidence that the diabetes epidemic is likely the cause.

Nonrefractive visual impairment increased by 21 percent among adults between 1999 and 2008 — a dramatic increase in a short period of time. When broken down by age, the largest increase in prevalence occurred in younger people — 20 to 39 years of age, compared to older age groups.

This is a stark finding that predicts climbing rates of disability among middle-aged and younger adults in the near future.

The researchers then looked to the risk factors for this type of visual impairment to find the potential underlying causes.

The risk factors include older age, poverty, lower education level, lack of health insurance, and diabetes. Diabetes rates increased by 22 percent among U.S. adults from 1999 to 2008, and the other risk factors remained relatively stable, suggesting that the increase in visual impairment was due to the increase in diabetes.

Once diabetes is diagnosed, the damage to the body progresses over time, and the risk of complications progressively rises.

Having diabetes for at least 10 years was linked to greater risk of nonrefractive visual impairment, and a greater proportion of the population had been living with diabetes for at least 10 years in 2008 compared to 1999; in adults younger than 40, this proportion doubled. Type 2 diabetes is becoming more common in younger populations, and therefore diabetes is beginning to do its damage earlier in life, bringing dangerous complications, such as vision impairment, earlier in life.

This is alarming data that begs for action; it indicates that medical advances toward better glucose control are not preventing vision loss due to diabetes.

Managing glucose with drugs is not enough—we must get rid of diabetes to get rid of the risk.

For type 1 and type 2 diabetics, the risk of vision-related complications can be dramatically reduced with a Nutritarian eating style plus frequent exer-

cise. The vegetable-based dietary program described in my book “The End of Diabetes” is the most effective dietary approach for those with diabetes and is much more effective than drugs. For a Type 2 diabetic, this approach results in complete reversal of the diabetic condition for the majority

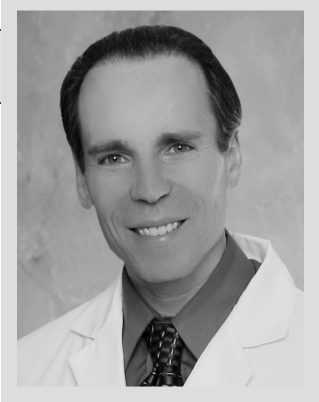
of patients.

For a Type 1 diabetic it eliminates the excessive highs and lows, dramatically reduces insulin requirements and prevents the degenerative diseases common in later life in those with type 1 diabetes. Both type 1 and type 2 diabetics can maintain excellent health, pro-

er eyesight and quality of life into old age.

Now is the time for us individually and collectively to utilize modern nutritional science to save our vision and save lives.

Dr. Fuhrman is a New York Times best-selling author and board certified family physician



specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine.

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