



BABY BOOMER EYE HEALTH AND DIABETES PREVENTION

Those of us past the age of 55 know that our eyes and vision have likely changed since we were in our twenties. For Baby Boomers (born between 1946 - 1964), many of these vision changes are simply part of the normal aging process. As these patients come to us regarding their changing vision, it's a perfect time for Doctors of Optometry (ODs) to check in with them regarding their health and their risk for

diabetes. According to the American Hospital Association, one out of four Baby Boomers will live with diabetes by 2030. Comprehensive eye exams often present an opening for ODs to detect signs of serious conditions related to eye health, and even systemic health, which may have few or no symptoms at the earliest, most treatable stages.

Every person with diabetes will develop some degree of retinal damage over time, including diabetic retinopathy, the leading cause of vision loss and irreversible blindness in Americans age 20 - 74. Diabetic retinopathy often has no symptoms until the disease has progressed to more severe stages. Coupled with an increased risk to develop other eye health conditions such as age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma, identification and prevention of diabetes for Baby Boomer patients is critical.



30.3 MILLION
Americans have diabetes

84.1 MILLION
Americans have prediabetes

—American Diabetes Association

7.7 MILLION
People ages 40 and older
have diabetic retinopathy.

11 MILLION by 2030

95% OF SEVERE VISION LOSS

from diabetic retinopathy can be prevented by early detection, timely treatment, and appropriate follow-up.

—National Eye Institute, 2013

More than 84 million Americans have prediabetes, a condition that can turn into Type 2 diabetes within five years without intervention, according to the CDC. As I tell my patients, you won't lose your vision to diabetes if you avoid it in the first place. As an optometrist specializing in diabetes eye care and education, my goals are to help patients prevent developing diabetic retinopathy and ensure they're referred to appropriate specialists for treatment if they develop sight-threatening eye disease. It's a team effort amongst eye doctors, patients, and other healthcare and wellness providers to achieve successful prevention, detection, and management of diabetes.

There's growing attention on helping our patients minimize symptoms of diabetes and diabetic retinopathy. Because of the diabetes epidemic, I spend many weekends speaking at optometric continuing education conferences to help colleagues implement strategies to do that. Simply put, having regular eye exams is one of the best strategies for detecting undiagnosed diabetes and diabetic retinopathy.

References Yau JW, Rogers SL, Kawasaki R, et al. Global prevalence and major risk factors of diabetic retinopathy. *Diabetes Care*. 2012;35(3):556-564. doi:10.2337/dc11-1909, Zhang N, Yang X, Zhu X, Zhao B, Huang T, Ji Q. Type 2 diabetes mellitus unawareness, prevalence, trends and risk factors: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 1999-2010. *J Int Med Res*. 2017;45(2):594-609. doi:10.1177/0300060517693178, Porto M, Curletto G et al. Estimating the Delay Between Onset and Diagnosis of Type 2 Diabetes From the Time Course of Retinopathy Prevalence *Diabetes Care* 2014 Jun; 37(6): 1668-1674.

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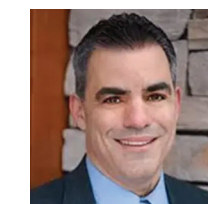


As ODs, we're dedicated to helping patients see their very best now and for a long time to come.



Retinal screening imaging is covered-in-full for VSP patients who have diabetes even if they don't have signs of diabetic eye disease through the VSP Primary EyeCare PlanSM and VSP Diabetic Eyecare Plus ProgramSM

To learn more about how VSP® and ODs are driving awareness on the importance of early detection and eye exams for patients with diabetes, visit vspeyeondiabetes.com



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