

Diabetes and Your Eyes

◆ Diabetes can cause a number of eye diseases, such as, **diabetic retinopathy**, cataracts or glaucoma. Diabetes can lead to vision loss or even blindness.

Studies show that diabetics are twice as likely to develop a cataract.



The longer you have diabetes, the greater the risk of getting glaucoma.

◆ The most common diabetic eye disease is diabetic retinopathy. It is caused by changes in the blood vessels of the retina. Retinal blood vessels may swell and leak fluid. In some cases abnormal blood vessels can grow on the surface of the retina. These changes can cause vision loss.

◆ In many people, there are no symptoms in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy. The vision may not change until the disease has progressed. Blurred vision may occur when the macula, the part of the retina that provides clear central vision, swells from the leaking fluid. This is called macular edema. If new vessels have grown on the surface of the retina, they can bleed into the eye, causing decreased vision.



◆ Diabetic retinopathy can often be treated with laser surgery. Laser can be used to shrink the abnormal new vessels or seal off the leaking vessels.



◆ Anyone with diabetes can develop diabetic retinopathy. The longer a person has diabetes, the more likely they may be to develop the disease. Nearly half of all diabetics will develop some degree of diabetic retinopathy in their lifetime. This is just one reason for you to work closely with your physician to keep your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol under control.

◆ In many cases diabetic eye disease can be treated before vision loss occurs. The only way to detect diabetic eye disease is through a dilated eye examination. The American Diabetes Association recommends that **“All people with diabetes need to get a dilated eye exam at least once a year.”** Finding and treating diabetic eye disease early is the best way to control diabetic eye disease.