



Diabetic Retinopathy FAQs

How prevalent is diabetes?

In 2015, 30.3 million Americans, or 9.4% of the population, had diabetes. 1.5 million Americans are diagnosed with diabetes every year. (American Diabetes Association)

What is diabetes costing the US health system?

The total cost of diabetes and prediabetes in the U.S. is \$322 billion. (American Diabetes Association)

What is diabetic retinopathy (DR)?

Over time, high blood sugar levels from diabetes leads to damage of the retina, a complication called diabetic retinopathy (DR). DR involves changes to blood vessels in the retina that causes them to bleed or leak fluid, resulting in distorted vision. If left untreated, DR can lead to vision loss or blindness.

How prevalent is diabetic retinopathy?

DR is a leading cause of blindness among working age adults. Approximately 24,000 go blind each year from DR in the United States. (CDC)

Why is early detection of diabetic retinopathy so important?

Early detection and treatment can prevent vision loss. Once the patient begins to notice symptoms, however, vision loss may be irreversible. The progression of disease varies greatly from person to person.

How often should someone with diabetes have their eyes checked for DR?

Patients diabetes are recommended to have a prompt eye exam at the time of their diabetes diagnosis, with at least yearly examinations thereafter. (AAO) However, only about 60% of people with diabetes currently have their eyes screened each year, putting them at risk of vision loss. For many, cost, time, and inconvenience of eye screening are barriers to adherence.

How is diabetic retinopathy treated once it is identified?

Treatment depends on the stage of disease. In its early stages, eye care specialists may opt for regular monitoring. Once the disease advances, laser treatment and anti-VEGF (vascular endothelial growth factor) injections are commonly used to manage the progression of disease.

Citations:

Retrieved from American Diabetes Association: <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/statistics/?referrer=http://www.webcrawler.com/info.wbcwrl.300.9/search/web?q=us%20diabetes%20statistics&ad.network=s&ad.keyword=us%20diabetes%20statistics&ad.create=75436764315&ad.position=1t1&ad.placement=&ad.ma>

Retrieved from CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/pdf/factsheet.pdf>

Retrieved from AAO: <https://www.aao.org/preferred-practice-pattern/diabetic-retinopathy-ppp-updated-2016>