November is Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month

With more than 100 million US adults living with diabetes or prediabetes\(^1\), there has been increasing focus on prevention, treatment and remedies for this pervasive disease. This is especially so regarding your eye health, since diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults aged 20 - 65 and everyone with diabetes are at risk for vision loss and blindness from diabetic eye disease\(^2\).

Mary Champion, MD, KU Eye Clinic retina specialist, said that often, the damage from diabetes to the eyes can occur for years without any noticeable symptoms, which is why it is important to have an eye exam yearly, as advised by your doctor\(^3\). Early detection and treatment is essential to preserving vision, added Dr. Champion.

While those with diabetes are more likely to develop cataracts at a younger age and are twice as likely to develop glaucoma than those without diabetes, diabetic retinopathy is the primary vision problem resulting from diabetes.

Dr. Champion explains, “Diabetic retinopathy occurs when diabetes damages the blood vessels of the eye, just as it damages the blood vessels all over the body leading to heart disease, kidney disease, and nerve damage. This can cause anything from mild blurry vision to complete blindness. Even with moderate control of diabetes, patients are at risk for visual complications the longer they have the disease, and it may not be detected until the changes are quite severe or irreversible. This is why it is important to manage your diabetes and to seek regular eye exams. Diabetic retinopathy can be treated and even reversed if caught early.”

To schedule an appointment with either of your KU Eye Clinic retina and vitreous specialists, Drs. Radwan Ajlan or Mary Champion, please contact us at 913-588-6600.

\(^1\)Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
\(^2\)Prevent Blindness America  