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Diabetes And Your Vision November 2004

During *National Diabetes Awareness Month* in November, Michigan Eye Care Specialists and the American Academy of Ophthalmology want to remind those with diabetes to protect their vision by having a dilated eye exam every year.

FACT: Diabetic eye problems are among the most common complications facing people with diabetes.

- Approximately 29 million Americans age 20 and older have diabetes. And half are at risk for vision loss because they do not know they have the disease.
- Diabetic retinopathy, a degenerative disease of the retina (the sensitive area at the back of the eye), affects 5.3 million Americans age eighteen and older each year.
- Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness among working-age Americans.
- Your risk of developing diabetic retinopathy increases with the number of years you've had diabetes. After 15 years with the disease, almost 80 percent of people with Type 1 diabetes have some form of diabetic eye disease.
- Diabetic retinopathy can also appear within the first year or two after the onset of the disease. For some people, diabetic retinopathy is one of the first signs they have diabetes.
- Diabetes can also affect your vision by causing cataracts and glaucoma.

FACT: Yearly dilated eye exams are crucial for protecting vision in people with diabetes.

- Early detection and treatment of diabetic retinopathy can usually prevent permanent vision loss.
- More than one third of those diagnosed with diabetes do not receive the recommended vision care and may be at risk for blindness.
- Call your Eye M.D. if you have diabetes and you notice vision changes that affect only one eye, last more than a few days or are not associated with changes in your blood sugar.
- Pregnant women with diabetes should have an eye exam in the first trimester – since diabetic eye disease can progress rapidly during pregnancy.

FACT: Keeping your blood sugar under control decreases your risks of many complications associated with diabetes, including eye disease.

- High blood sugar can damage the blood vessels in the retina, which can lead to vision loss or blindness.
- Rapid changes in blood sugar can cause temporary changes in vision, even if diabetic eye diseases aren't present.
- It's especially important to keep blood sugar in good control for a few days before being examined for glasses because changing blood sugar levels can make you end up with corrective lenses that don't work for you later.