

## Talk to your family about diabetes and healthy vision

Written by

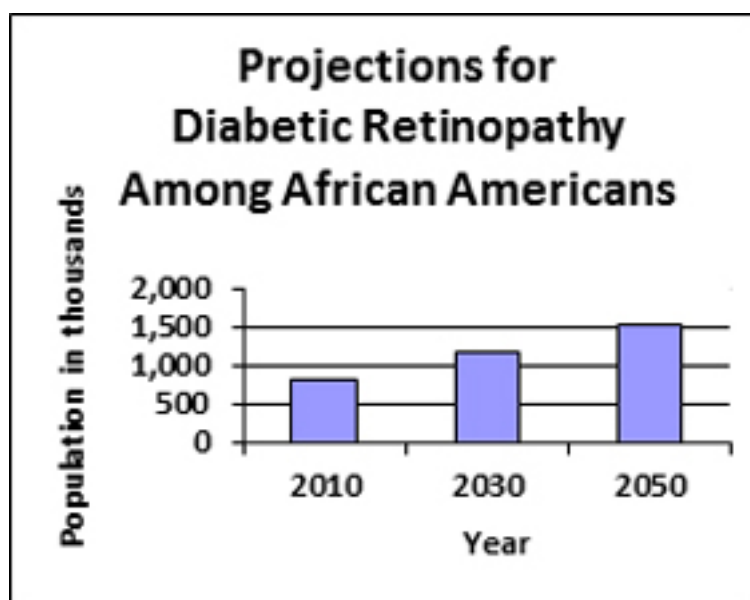
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The subject of diabetes seems to be everywhere these days—in the news, on social media, even on talk shows. In fact, 26 million people have diabetes, and this number is increasing, putting more people at risk for health complications. If you or someone in your family has diabetes, you should talk to them about diabetic eye disease, one of the complications of diabetes.

Diabetic eye disease includes cataract, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy, which is the most common form of the disease. Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness in adults 20–74 years of age. More than 800,000 African Americans have diabetic retinopathy, and this number will likely reach 1.2 million by 2030. While everyone who has diabetes can get diabetic eye disease, African Americans are at higher risk of losing vision or going blind from it.



"The longer a person has diabetes, the greater is his or her risk of developing diabetic eye disease," said Paul A. Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., director of the National Eye Institute (NEI). "If you have diabetes, be sure to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year. Don't wait until you notice an eye problem to have an exam, because vision that is lost cannot be restored."

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Unfortunately, diabetic eye disease often has no early warning signs. But the good news you can share with your family is that it can be detected early and treated before vision loss occurs.

"In fact, with early detection, timely treatment, and appropriate follow-up care, people with diabetes can reduce their risk of severe vision loss by 95 percent," adds Suber Huang, M.D., M.B.A., chair of the Diabetic Eye Disease Subcommittee for NEI's National Eye Health Education Program.

Research has also shown that when people with diabetes have good control of their blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol, they can help delay getting diabetic eye disease, or slow its progress. In addition to having annual comprehensive dilated eye exams, people with diabetes should do the following to keep their health on TRACK:

# Diabetic Eye Disease

## What is it?

It refers to eye problems people with diabetes may have. These include



There are often NO early warning signs.

### Cataract

Clouding of the lens of the eye.



### Diabetic retinopathy

Damage to blood vessels in the retina; most common.



### Glaucoma

Damage to the optic nerve.



## What are the numbers?

7.7 million people ages 40 and older have diabetic retinopathy. Will reach 11 million people by 2030.



# 95%

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

## Who is at risk?

→ All people with diabetes.



The longer you have diabetes, the higher your risk of getting diabetic eye disease.

## How is it detected?

Through a comprehensive dilated eye exam.



## What can you do?

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~~[http://www.diabetes.org.au/healthy-vision/healthy-vision-for-people-with-diabetes](#)~~