



Diabetic Eye Disease Month

In the United States, diabetic eye disease is the leading cause of vision loss among working-age adults.

Diabetic eye disease has no warning signs. Finding and treating the disease early, before it causes vision loss or blindness, is the best way to control diabetic eye disease. If you have diabetes, make sure you get a dilated eye examination at least once a year.

Diabetic eye disease refers to a group of eye problems that people with diabetes may face as a complication of this disease. All can cause severe vision loss or even blindness.

Diabetic eye disease includes:

- Diabetic retinopathy: Damage to the blood vessels in the retina.
- Cataract: Clouding of the lens of the eye.
- Glaucoma: Increase in fluid pressure inside the eye that leads to optic nerve damage and loss of vision.

People with diabetes develop cataract at an earlier age than people without diabetes. Cataract can usually be treated by surgery. A person with diabetes is nearly twice as likely to get glaucoma as other adults. And, as with diabetic retinopathy, the longer you have had diabetes, the greater your risk of getting glaucoma. Glaucoma may be treated with medications, laser surgery, or conventional surgery.

Diabetic retinopathy is the most common form of this disease, and affects about 28.5 percent of Americans with diabetes age 40 and older. That's more than 7 million people, and the number is expected to reach more than 11 million by the year 2030.

The condition can creep up quietly. It gradually weakens small blood vessels in and around the retina, the light-sensing layer of tissue at the back of the eye. If the disease progresses, these vessels may rupture and leak blood into the eye; they can also spread and grow on the surface of the retina and cause scarring.

Typically, diabetic retinopathy has no symptoms until it reaches an advanced stage. But the disease can be detected early through a comprehensive dilated eye exam. In this procedure, an eye professional will put drops in your eye to dilate (widen) the pupil, which allows a closer look at the retina.

The good news is that with early detection, timely treatment, and appropriate follow-up, the risk of severe vision loss from diabetic retinopathy can be reduced by 95 percent. There are several effective treatment options including laser surgery and injections of anti-VEGF drugs. These drugs block the actions of a protein that can cause abnormal blood vessels to grow and leak fluid.

If you have diabetes, it's a good time to remember these health tips:

- Get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.
- Control your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels. By controlling your diabetes, you'll reduce your risk of diabetic eye disease.
- Talk to your eye care professional about diabetic retinopathy.

BY: National Institutes of Health

Recipe of the Month

Pumpkin Soup *Serves 4*

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup water
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 can (8 ounces) pumpkin puree
- 1 cup unsalted vegetable broth
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cup fat-free milk
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 green onion top only, chopped

Directions:

In a large saucepan, heat 1/4 cup of the water over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Don't let the onion dry out. Add the remaining water, pumpkin, broth, cinnamon and nutmeg. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the milk and cook until hot. Don't boil. Ladle into warmed individual bowls and garnish with black pepper and green onion tops. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Information:

Calories 73, Total Fat 1g, Cholesterol >1mg, Total Carbs 13g, Protein 3g

