

Health & Nutrition

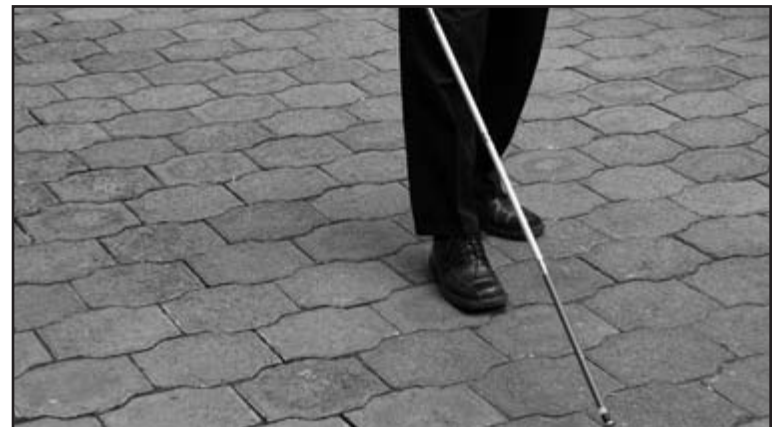
Diabetics: Don't Turn a Blind Eye to Vision Screenings

(NewsUSA) – Diabetics who do not look to their long-term health may find themselves walking blind; diabetes can cause a cluster of degenerative eye problems. Diabetic retinopathy, the most common diabetic eye disease, is a leading cause of blindness in the United States.

In diabetic retinopathy, blood vessels in the eye become blocked, encouraging new blood vessels to grow in abnormal areas, including the retina, or the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. These new blood vessels are delicate and prone to swelling and breaking. When they rupture or leak blood, they cause severe vision loss or blindness.

Floating spots, blurred vision, dark streaks, poor night vision and vision loss can all herald diabetic retinopathy, but the disease often develops without symptoms. Both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetics can develop diabetic retinopathy.

The longer a person lives



with diabetes, the greater the risk. Approximately two percent of all people who have diabetes for 15 years go blind, while another 10 percent suffer severe vision loss. About 74 percent of the people who have diabetes for 10 years or more will develop some form of diabetic retinopathy.

Early detection and timely treatment prove key; even diabetics with retinopathy can reduce their chances of blindness by 95 percent if they receive proper care. But once damage occurs, it is usually permanent.

The World Health Organization estimates that 246 million people have diabetes worldwide. The organization expects that number to reach 380 million by 2025. Small lifestyle changes can help diabetics reduce their risk of developing diabetic eye disease. Diabetics and people at risk for diabetes should schedule annual eye exams.

Organizations such as Lions Clubs International support local and large-scale efforts to control diabetes and diabetic retinopathy. For more information, visit www.lionsclubs.org.

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Walk Your Way to Better Health

(NewsUSA) – Want to get outdoors, improve your health and socialize with friends? It might be time to put on your walking shoes.

Regular physical activity may help control weight and lower the risk for certain diseases.

Some exercise is always better than none. If you're not used to exercise, walking is a great way to become more active. Walking requires a pair of sturdy walking shoes to get started, and proves a viable way to burn calories, build bone density, reduce the risk of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease, and socialize with friends.

Not sure how to get started? Sisters Together: Move More, Eat Better, a national initiative of the Weight-control Information Network (WIN) designed to encourage Black women to exercise and eat healthier foods, offers the following tips to get moving:

* Make it fun. Find a partner. Your walking partner should be able to match your speed.

* Find proper footgear. Wear shoes with proper arch support, a firm heel and thick,



flexible soles.

* Wear clothes that will keep you dry and comfortable. Look for synthetic fabrics that absorb sweat and remove it from your skin.

* Divide your walk into sections. Warm up by walking slowly for five minutes. Then, increase your speed and do a fast walk. Finally, cool down by walking slowly again for five minutes. Do light stretching after your warm-up and cool-down.

* Try to walk as often as possible. To avoid stiff or sore muscles and joints, start

gradually. Over several weeks, begin walking faster, going farther, and walking for longer periods of time. Aim for 30 minutes of walking a day on most, if not all, days of the week.

* Set goals and rewards. A goal might be participating in a fun walk or walking continuously for 30 minutes. Reward yourself when you meet a goal, but not with high-calorie foods.

For more information and tips, visit the WIN site at www.win.niddk.nih.gov.

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