

Spotting the symptoms of diabetic retinopathy

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(HealthDay)—Most Americans over 40 don't know the signs of diabetic retinopathy, a new survey finds.

The condition affects nearly 8 million Americans, and that number is expected to double by 2050, but most adults don't know facts about [diabetic retinopathy](#) that could help save their sight.

The survey of 1,000 U.S. adults by the American Society of Retina Specialists (ASRS) found 47% didn't know that blurry central vision can be a symptom of diabetic retinopathy and only 37% knew that seeing spots or floaters is a symptom. Most people knew that type 1, type 2 or [gestational diabetes](#) puts patients at risk of diabetic retinopathy, but other risk factors weren't as well-known.

Of those polled, 64% did not know that high cholesterol increases the risk of diabetic retinopathy, and 48% didn't know that [high blood pressure](#) is a risk factor.

"Diabetic retinopathy is a preventable cause of blindness, so early identification and treatment is critical," said Dr. Carl Awh, president of the ASRS.

"All [health care providers](#) who care for [diabetic patients](#) should emphasize the importance of controlling known risk factors and the need for regular dilated retina examinations to identify diabetic retinopathy at an early stage," Awh said in a society news release.

"Many patients with sight-threatening diabetic retinopathy have excellent vision and no symptoms, which is the ideal time for a retina specialist to begin treatment. Diabetic patients with vision loss or symptoms should be evaluated more urgently," he advised.

Other [risk factors](#) include:

- Having diabetes for a long time.
- Poor control of blood sugar levels over time.

- High blood pressure.
- Kidney disease.
- High cholesterol.
- Pregnancy.

Symptoms can include:

- Blurred or distorted vision.
- Difficulty reading.
- Spots in your vision.
- Shadow across the field of vision.
- Eye pressure.
- Difficulty with color perception.

Protect your vision by:

- Controlling blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Taking diabetes medications.
- Getting regular retina exams.
- Quitting smoking.
- Staying active.

"Advances in early detection and treatment of diabetic eye disease made possible by retina specialists can preserve sight and virtually eliminate [vision loss](#)," ASRS Foundation President Dr. Timothy Murray said in the release. "If you have diabetes and experience issues with your sight, partner with a retina specialist for expert care that can prevent, treat or reverse damage to the retina from diabetes."

More information: For more on diabetic retinopathy, see the U.S. National Eye Institute: [www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-ey ... diabetic-retinopathy](http://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-ey...diabetic-retinopathy)

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