



Open Your Eyes to the Risks and Effects of Diabetes

Ottawa, ON (November 12, 2014) – During National Diabetes Awareness Month, the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) reminds Canadians of the importance of routine eye exams. While many people know about the challenges related to insulin and high blood sugar not everyone is as aware of the damaging effects that diabetes can have on your vision and eye health.

Canadian doctors of optometry join the Canadian Diabetes Association in asking Canadians to [Take the CANRISK Test](#). The test assesses the danger of developing the disease, outlines risk factors and offers suggestions to help prevent or delay its development and complications.

Diabetes can affect many parts of the eye, but the biggest threat to vision is when it begins to cause a weakening or swelling in the tiny blood vessels that nourish the retina. This condition-*diabetic retinopathy*, is the most common cause of blindness in people under the age of 65 and the single largest cause of blindness in Canada.

Dr. Paul Geneau, CAO President notes that “Early detection is crucial, as treatment is more likely to be successful at an early stage.”

Some symptoms that may occur at the onset of retinopathy are blurred vision, flashes of light in the field of vision and sudden loss of vision or blotches or spots in vision. That said, there may be **no symptoms at all** in its early stages, making the importance of regular visits with an optometrist so important.

Here are steps you can take to catch and prevent the progression of diabetic retinopathy and other dangerous changes in your eyes:

- See an optometrist for a thorough eye examination at least once a year to monitor changes in your eyes.
- If you have been diagnosed with diabetes, continue to see a see an optometrist annually and more frequently if recommended
- See your physician regularly and follow instructions about diet, exercise and medication
- Maintain optimal blood glucose levels, blood pressure and blood cholesterol.
- Be aware of the factors that increase your risk such as smoking, high blood pressure, drinking alcohol and pregnancy



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS
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For more information or to arrange an interview with a doctor of optometry, please contact:

Debra Yearwood
Director of Marketing and Communications
Tel.: 613 235 7924 Ext 217
Email: dyearwood@opto.ca

Catherine Heinmiller
Communications Coordinator
Tel.: 613 235 7924 Ext 210
Email: cheinmiller@opto.ca