

## FACTS ABOUT DIABETES

### *Did you know:*

Nearly 21 million Americans have diabetes and more than 6 million Americans are unaware that they have the disease. In addition to overall health complications, diabetes can cause changes in vision and ultimately lead to blindness. In fact, diabetes is the No. 1 cause of new cases of blindness among adults. The American Optometric Association (AOA) strongly encourages individuals to have regular, comprehensive eye examinations.

Optometrists can serve as the first line of detection for diabetes because the eye is the only place on the body that blood vessels can be seen without having to look through skin or tissue.

Individuals who are at high risk for diabetes need to have regular, dilated eye exams and all individuals with known diabetes need to have dilated eye exams each year. Fortunately, in nearly all cases, diabetic retinopathy, a potentially blinding complication of diabetes, can be diagnosed during a dilated eye exam. Early detection of diabetes is critical to maintain healthy vision.

If diabetes results in some loss of vision, a doctor of optometry can help patients regain their quality of life by maximizing their remaining vision with low-vision rehabilitation.

#### Key facts about diabetes:

- An estimated 54 million Americans aged 40 to 74 (40.1 percent of the U.S. population in this age group) have pre-diabetes, a condition that puts them at high risk for developing type 2 diabetes.
- People with diabetes are 40 percent more likely to develop glaucoma.
- People with diabetes are 60 percent more likely to develop cataracts.
- Diabetes risk factors include age, obesity, physical inactivity, a family history of the disease, medical history of gestational diabetes, and impaired glucose tolerance.

Regular eye exams by a doctor of optometry are essential to maintain eye health and can also contribute to good overall health.