

## **Diabetes Awareness Month helps highlight the importance of regular eye care to avoid vision loss**

### *Early diagnosis can save eyesight for those living with diabetes*

**TORONTO, Nov. 9, 2020** - One of the leading causes of blindness among Canadians is diabetic retinopathy, which affects as many as 749,800 people, yet early detection and treatment can reduce the risk of blindness by 95 per cent, according to the Canadian Ophthalmological Society. To spread awareness during Diabetes Awareness Month, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society and Diabetes Canada have partnered to highlight the importance of regular eye care for preventing vision loss among the approximately 11.5 million Canadians who are currently living with diabetes or prediabetes.

Damage to people's eyes can happen before they notice any difference in their vision, when they have diabetes or even prediabetes. High blood sugar levels may cause blood vessels in the retina—the part of the eye which works like film in a camera and enables vision— to swell and leak, distorting sight and potentially leading to blindness. Maintaining blood sugar within the target range, along with recommended ophthalmologic interventions, reduces the risk of progression of DR, and even patients with advanced disease may regain some vision.

"Being diagnosed with any disease already comes with its own host of challenges, let alone losing your eyesight, which can dramatically affect independence and quality of life," says Dr. Colin Mann, President of the Canadian Ophthalmological Society. "The odds of getting a serious eye disease are higher than you think and, for adults with diabetes in particular, regular eye exams at least once a year are a critical part of complete diabetes care and management."

Today, Canadians at age 20 face a staggering 50 per cent chance of developing diabetes in their lifetime. And while all people with diabetes are at risk for DR, certain factors or conditions, such as pregnancy with type 1 diabetes and high blood pressure can worsen it. Maintaining good blood sugar control and having regular eye exams can reduce the risk of vision loss from DR. In most cases, a diabetic eye exam is covered by provincial health plans.

The theme of Diabetes Canada's Diabetes Awareness Month campaign is "Let's End Diabetes Together" and, during the month of November, will shine a light on the challenges and triumphs of those affected by the disease.

"The driving force behind our annual campaign is to advocate for and bring greater awareness of diabetes, its risk factors and misconceptions," said Laura Syron, president and CEO of Diabetes Canada. "Now more than ever, we need to awaken the world to the epidemic that diabetes has become."

Canadians can find out if they are at risk of developing one of four serious eye diseases, including DR, by taking a quick risk assessment on [seethepossibilities.ca](http://seethepossibilities.ca). Learn how to get involved during Diabetes Awareness Month by visiting [diabetes.ca/diabetes-awareness-month](http://diabetes.ca/diabetes-awareness-month).

### **About Canadian Ophthalmological Society**

The Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) is the national, recognized authority on eye and vision care in Canada. As eye physicians and surgeons, we are committed to assuring the provision of optimal medical and surgical eye care for all Canadians by promoting excellence in ophthalmology and by providing services to support our members in practice. Our membership includes over 900 ophthalmologists and 200 ophthalmology residents. We work collaboratively with government, other national and international specialty societies, our academic communities (ACUPO), our provincial partners and affiliates and other eye care professionals and patient groups to advocate for health policy in Canada in the area of eye and vision health. COS is an accredited, award-winning provider of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) through the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) and is an affiliate of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA). For more information, visit [cos-sco.ca](http://cos-sco.ca).

### **About Diabetes Awareness Month**

Today, close to 11.5 million Canadians are living with or affected by diabetes—that's one in three. This November, 'Let's End Diabetes Together' and create greater awareness. Please visit [diabetes.ca/diabetes-awareness-month](http://diabetes.ca/diabetes-awareness-month) to learn how you can get involved.

### **About Diabetes Canada**

Diabetes Canada is the registered national charitable organization that is making the invisible epidemic of diabetes visible and urgent. Diabetes Canada partners with Canadians to End Diabetes through:

- Resources for health-care professionals on best practices to care for people with diabetes;
- Advocacy to governments, schools and workplaces; and
- Funding world-leading Canadian research to improve treatments and find a cure.

For more information, visit [diabetes.ca](http://diabetes.ca) or call 1-800-BANTING (226-8464).

### **For further information:**

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