Diabetic Retinopathy
What You Should Know

By Samuel F. Boles, MD
Board Certified Ophthalmologist
Anne Arundel Eye Center

About Dr. Samuel Boles
A Board Certified Ophthalmologist, Dr. Samuel Boles is considered one of Maryland’s top Surgeons with a subspeciality in cataract and glaucoma disease. Voted a “Top Doc” by his peers, Dr. Boles received his medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia and completed his post-doctoral training at Harvard, Yale and George Washington Universities. He founded the Glaucoma Co-Management Roundtable to improve patient care through better communication and education. An active volunteer in the community offering periodic free screenings and specific community outreach programs, Dr. Boles serves on the Board of Directors for The Polakoff Foundation and the Maryland Society for Sight.

About Anne Arundel Eye Center
Serving the Anne Arundel County and the surrounding region since 2007, Anne Arundel Eye Center offers complete ophthalmic exams as well as diagnostic surgical eye care with a specialty in cataract and glaucoma diagnosis and treatment. The entire medical team, including founder Samuel F. Boles, M.D. and Consultative Optometrist Nathan T. Frank, O.D., is dedicated to making the best eye case accessible to everyone. This article is part of a larger ongoing series. For more information, visit AnneArundelEyeCenter.com or call 410-224-2010.

Diabetic Retinopathy
What You Should Know

According to the American Diabetes Association, more than 25.8 million children and adults in the United States - 8.3% of the population - have diabetes. In addition to getting regular medical care, it’s important for all those with diabetes to make sure they are having regular eye exams to help prevent Diabetic Retinopathy, the most common diabetic eye disease.

In Americans ages 20-74 years, diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness and 28.5 percent of Americans with diabetes have some degree of retinopathy. By the time symptoms of this eye disease appear, it may be too late to reverse the damage. Therefore, it is important for all people with diabetes to have a professional eye exam at least once a year, or more frequently if determined by an eye doctor.

What Is It?
Diabetic Retinopathy is the most common progressive eye disease resulting from long-term diabetes. Specifically, it is damage to the blood vessels in the eye. There are two types (stages) of Diabetic Retinopathy:

Non-proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy is the first stage. Enlarged blood vessels and fluid/blood leaking into the retina cause problems with eyesight.

Proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy is the more advanced type. New blood vessels form in the eye and hemorrhage, causing scarring on the retina and other parts of the eye. This results in many problems with sight and can lead to complete vision loss.

What Are The Symptoms?
In the early stages of Diabetic Retinopathy, no symptoms will occur. In fact, for people with diabetes, dangerous changes in the retina often happen before a change in sight is noticed. Not until the case is severe will the blood vessels show signs of damage and symptoms which may include:

- Blurred vision
- Shadows or loss of areas of vision
- Difficulty seeing at nighttime
- Swelling of blood vessels in the eye
- Vessels may leak fluid
- Abnormal blood vessels growing on the surface of the retina

How Is It Treated?
Prevention is the best approach; however, there are effective ways to treat diabetic eye disease, particularly in its early stages.

To prevent Diabetic Retinopathy initially, you must tightly regulate blood sugar and refrain from smoking. Regular, comprehensive eye exams are necessary to prevent further damage.

Treatment in the earliest stage is not always necessary but must be closely monitored by a specialist. Treatment in more severe cases does not reverse damage but can keep the disease from getting worse.

This includes focal laser treatment that impacts smaller areas and scatter laser treatment which treats a large area of the eye. Both treatments reduce the size of the abnormal vessels that have formed on the retina. Laser treatment is only available if the vessels have not yet started to hemorrhage. If bleeding has occurred, a surgical treatment called a vitrectomy must be performed to remove the blood in the eye.

New treatment options are in development as scientists work toward a better understanding of this eye disease. For now, early detection of and care by your eye doctor are essential for the successful treatment of patients with diabetes.

Established Practice.
Welcoming New Patients.

A regional leader in comprehensive diagnostic and surgical eye care, specializing in Cataracts and Glaucoma. Accepting all Insurances.

Convenient hours and location.

(410) 224-2010 AnneArundelEyeCenter.com