

# Eliminate vision loss, start with screening

HEALTH PLUS MEDICAL  
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## How does diabetes affect my eyes?

If your blood glucose stays high over time, it can damage the tiny blood vessels in the back of your eyes, blood vessels may leak fluid and cause swelling. New, weak blood vessels may also begin to grow.

These blood vessels can bleed into the middle part of the eye, lead to scarring, or cause dangerously high pressure inside your eye.

Often, there are no warning signs of

diabetic eye disease or vision loss when damage first develops, emphasising the need for regular screening.

## Trinidad Eye Hospital making a difference

In 2016, Dr Ronnie Bhola, founded the Trinidad Eye Hospital (TEH), the first not-for-profit organisation of its kind in the region performing charitable eye care outreach programmes for those who cannot afford to meet their eye care needs on their own.

The focus of TEH is to strive towards preventing avoidable blindness for

those who are vulnerable and in need of quality eye care services.

With a robust mission of screening over 80% of the diabetic population by the year 2025, the Trinidad Eye Hospital Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (TEH DESP) with Clinical Lead, Dr Vineeth Kumar, has screened over 2500 diabetic patients over the last two years and identified a considerable number with notable eye disease.

"Many of our patients in Trinidad and Tobago take their eyesight for granted but the price to pay: loss of sight; is too high for the individual, one's family,

community, and country. We estimate that over 95% of diabetics in T&T are not screened on an annual basis and at the appropriate time, which places them at an increased risk of losing their sight," Dr Ronnie Bhola, vitreous and retinal surgeon.

There is also focus on patient education and continuous programmes for ophthalmologists and optometrists via partnerships with the University of the West Indies and other international training bodies. TEH aims to increase collaboration with PAHO, WHO and many other local and international health agencies to achieve the many objectives set out for eye health management globally.

## Diabetic retinopathy screening

Diabetic retinopathy is an eye condition affecting the retina of persons with diabetes. Diabetic retinopathy screening lets you know whether your diabetes is damaging your eyes and is a key component of diabetes care. Diabetic retinopathy screening also helps detect other eye conditions such as glaucoma and cataracts which tend to occur often in persons with diabetes. If caught early, blindness is prevented.

Diabetic retinopathy screening at the Trinidad Eye Hospital uses advanced digital photography. The programme uses EYEPACS software (US-based company) to capture the photographs and utilising our accreditation partner, UK Gloucester University accredited graders to generate reports.

## Action call to all diabetics

Dr Ronnie Bhola shared, "Our main message to all persons with diabetes is to seek out support from care providers. Prevention is better than cure."

- Improving your blood sugar levels has huge health benefits
- While you work to improve blood sugar, you should also get your eyes checked
- Managing your blood pressure is crucial and incorporating proper nutrition and exercise.



Trinidad Eye Hospital Screening Initiative in November 2020



## World Diabetes Day NOV 17, 2020

### IF THE BLOOD SUGAR'S HIGH CHECK YOUR EYES

#### WHAT IS DIABETIC EYE DISEASE?

Diabetic eye disease is a condition that can result in a decrease in a person's vision, it affects the blood vessels on the retina (the thin membrane that processes light at the back of the eye). Diabetic retinopathy is a leading cause of permanent blindness in Trinidad and Tobago and a leading cause of blindness in the ages 45-65.

#### SYMPTOMS OF DIABETIC EYE DISEASE.

Some symptoms of diabetic eye disease that you should look out for are:

- Spots or Dark strings floating in the vision.
- Blurred Vision
- Loss of vision
- Consistent shadows in the vision
- Loss of colour vision

### WHEN TO GET CHECKED?

#### EARLY DETECTION OF DIABETIC EYE DISEASE IS IMPORTANT!

There are two types of diabetes that can be diagnosed in a patient:

- **Type 1 diabetes** (Insulin dependent) is generally found in the younger population and tends to be diagnosed early. Patients diagnosed with type 1 diabetes should get their eyes checked within a 5-year period after being diagnosed and are to be followed up on a yearly basis
- **Type 2 diabetes** (Non-insulin dependent) is more frequently found in the older population and can be diagnosed late. Patients diagnosed with type 2 diabetes should get their eyes check as soon as they are diagnosed and should be followed up on a yearly basis unless your eye specialist states otherwise

### TREATMENT FOR DIABETIC EYE DISEASE

#### DIABETIC EYE DISEASE CAN BE TREATED IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- **DIABETES CONTROL** - the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy is reduced by strict control of blood sugar levels on a continuous basis.
- **RETINAL SWELLING & Retinopathy** - Injection of a special medication into the eye to dry up the swollen retina. Laser therapy may be used alone or after the injections.
- **LASER** - An intense beam of light is used to seal and reduce the leakage from blood vessels allowing the retina to dry.
- **SURGERY** - For Complicated Diabetic Retinopathy.

**THE CARIBBEAN EYE INSTITUTE (CEI)**  
Working to prevent Diabetic Blindness since 1996.

- First OCT Imaging 2003
- Digital Fluorescein Angiography (with injections) 2005.
- OCT Angiography (without injections) 2016
- First Retinal team of Medical and Surgical specialists.

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