

Dear Friends



Welcome to our first newsletter written for those with diabetes or at risk of diabetes, as well as family and carers. The newsletter will provide information about protecting your

sight if you have diabetes, as well as updates on treatments, research and advocacy for diabetic eye disease.

Everyone with diabetes is at risk of developing diabetic eye disease. Most people consider sight to be their most precious sense so it is critical to be aware of the risk of diabetic eye disease and to understand how to prevent its onset. For those who already have diabetic eye disease, there are steps to take to reduce the risk of further vision loss.

The management of diabetes can be difficult. Living with diabetic retinopathy and the potential impact on vision can be challenging. However, most people with

diabetic retinopathy should keep most, if not all vision, provided it is diagnosed early and all steps are taken to keep it under control.

As with all macular diseases, early detection, rapid diagnosis and treatment are critical to saving sight.

Helpline - 1800 111 709

The Helpline provides information, guidance and support especially for those at risk and those living with macular disease including their family, friends and carers. It is open weekdays 9am - 5pm (AEST/ADST) excluding public holidays.

Please spread the word about our service and tell your friends and family with diabetes to phone the Foundation to obtain a free information kit and advice on eye health.

Take care.

Julie Heraghty
Chief Executive Officer

About diabetic retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is a very serious eye disease caused by diabetes. It can lead to permanent vision loss and blindness, however in the vast majority of cases, major vision loss from the disease can be prevented.

Diabetes causes the blood vessels in the eye to become weaker and leak fluid. If this fluid leaks into the macula, the central part of the retina at the back of the eye, and is left untreated, it can cause significant vision loss and even blindness. Diabetes can also affect other parts of the eye and is a significant risk factor for glaucoma and early cataracts.

The macula is responsible for central vision that is necessary to read, distinguish faces, drive and carry out other activities requiring detailed vision. Diabetic macular oedema (DME) is the most common cause of significant vision loss from diabetic retinopathy.

Early detection is critical.

Early diabetic retinopathy does not have any symptoms and progressive damage occurs before any change to vision.

Sometimes disease progression can be rapid.

Living Well

I've been diagnosed with diabetes, now what?

- It is so important to follow your doctor's instructions to keep your diabetes under control
- Many people have had diabetes for years before it is detected, so it is essential to have an eye test when you are first diagnosed. This will detect any damage which may have already occurred and also provide your eye care professional with a baseline on which to compare future eye tests.
- Following your initial eye test, you should have an eye test at least every 2 years **(or more often if recommended by your eye care professional)**.
- Never ignore any changes in vision. If you experience any changes, see your eye care professional immediately. Careful control of your diabetes, early detection of eye problems and timely treatment are the best ways to save sight.

Remember: The longer you have had diabetes, the more important it is to have regular eye tests, even if the tests have always been clear in the past. This is because the risk of eye disease is strongly related to the duration of diabetes.

How often should eye tests be done?

- **If you have diabetes**, have a comprehensive eye exam at least every two years, even if your vision seems perfect.
- **People with diabetes with additional risk factors**, including indigenous people, should be tested at least every 12 months, even if vision appears to be perfect. Other risk factors include poorly controlled blood glucose or blood pressure.
- **People with existing diabetic eye disease** should be tested every 12 months, even if vision appears to be perfect, or more frequently if disease is advanced.

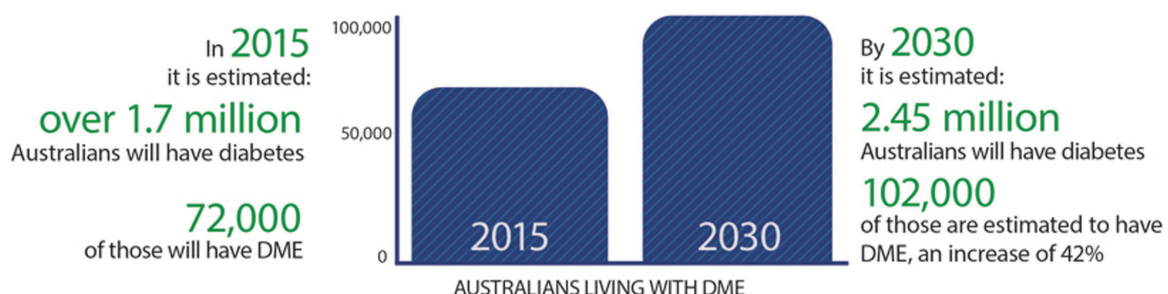
If there are any sudden changes in vision, have an eye test as soon as possible.

How many Australians are affected by diabetic macular oedema?

The most common cause of significant vision loss with diabetes is diabetic macular oedema (DME), where leaking fluid accumulates under the macula causing swelling and a loss of central vision.

An estimated 72,000 Australians are living with diabetic macular oedema and this will rise dramatically to 102,000 by 2030 - that's 102,000 people at risk of blindness.

DME IS A MAJOR AND GROWING CAUSE OF VISION LOSS IN AUSTRALIANS WITH DIABETES



Marcia Hines: “Keeping an eye on my diabetes”

Australian music icon Marcia Hines knows all about diabetes and the damage this disease can cause the body, including the eyes. Marcia has lived with type 1 diabetes for over 27 years and at the age of 60, says managing her diabetes, which includes a healthy lifestyle and regular eye tests, is vital to maintaining good health and sight.

“For me to feel my best, a balanced, healthy diet is essential,” says Marcia. “Oats, fruit and vegetables are some of my favourite healthy foods.” Regular exercise is also a priority for Marcia. “Like most people, I have days where I have to motivate myself to exercise, but once I’m out and about, I feel absolutely fantastic,” she said.



Photo: Graham Jepson

Blueberry Hotcakes

A delicious breakfast treat or after dinner dessert.

Serves 6

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes



Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 125ml apple sauce
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
- 840g natural yoghurt (low fat)
- 280g wholemeal self raising flour
- 230g fresh blueberries

Method

1. Beat all egg whites in small bowl with electric mixer until soft peaks form.
2. Combine egg yolk, apple sauce, vanilla essence, 2 cups (560g) of the yoghurt, flour and half the blueberries in large bowl; fold in egg whites, in two batches.
3. Heat oiled small frying pan and pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60ml) of the batter into pan. Cook until bubbles appear on surface. Turn hotcake and cook until browned lightly. Remove from pan and cover to keep warm. Repeat with remaining batter. Serve hotcakes topped with remaining yoghurt and blueberries.

Representation

Australians with diabetic macular oedema now have access to sight-saving treatment on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

In 2015, the Federal Government listed two sight-saving anti-VEGF treatments on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for treatment of diabetic macular oedema. This is an outstanding outcome to ensure affordable access to registered treatments which have been fully evaluated and approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for safety and efficacy. The Foundation advocated strongly for this result.

Associate Professor Alex P Hunyor, retinal specialist and member of the Foundation's Medical Committee said, "This is an excellent outcome for the eye health of Australians that registered treatments

are now available for diabetic macular oedema. People with diabetes are often grappling with several medical conditions and numerous medications related to their diabetes, so making treatments affordable with PBS reimbursement will be of great importance to help people manage their condition."

The Foundation will continue to advocate strongly for accessibility and affordability of registered treatments.

Did you know?

Early diagnosis, management and treatment of diabetic eye disease can prevent over 90% of vision loss¹.

If you have a friend or a family member who has diabetes, tell them to call the Foundation to register for a free information kit and ongoing information. It could save their sight.

Helpline 1800 111 709



References

1. Guidelines for the management of diabetic retinopathy, 2008, NHMRC

Donations

Thank you for supporting Macular Disease Foundation Australia. As a charitable organisation we rely on your generosity to service the macular disease community across Australia and fund our Research Grants Program.

If you are able to help us at this time a donation slip and reply paid envelope are enclosed for your convenience. You can also make a secure online donation using your credit card at www.mdffoundation.com.au or contact the Foundation to set up a direct debit.

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Bequests are gratefully accepted. Please call the Foundation for more information.

Contact us

Suite 902, Level 9
447 Kent Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Helpline 1800 111 709

info@mdffoundation.com.au

www.mdffoundation.com.au

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