



Retina Consultants, P.C.

Diseases and Surgery of the Retina, Vitreous and Uveitis

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Diabetic Retinopathy

INTRODUCTION:

Diabetic eye disease is currently the number one cause for permanent vision loss in those between the ages of 45-60 in the United States. In those above the age of 65 it is the second leading cause of vision loss behind macular degeneration. All patients with diabetes will at some point in their lives develop diabetic eye disease. As the population of diabetics increases in this country there has been a large increase in the number of people whose eye disease puts them at risk for serious and possibly permanent disability. It is the job of both the primary care physician and ophthalmologist to see that those with diabetes get appropriate treatment and follow-up throughout their lives.



DISEASE DEFINITION & CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS:

Diabetic retinopathy is a disorder that begins as damage to vascular function in the retina. As the ability of blood vessels to adequately perfuse retina tissue decreases, the persistent non-perfusion leads to damage to retina cell structure. This lack of proper blood supply to the retina will progress to a clinical picture of retina hemorrhages, venous abnormalities and collections of retina exudation that hamper retina function. Later stages of damage include retina edema (particularly in the macula) and neovascularization that increases the chances of hemorrhaging and traction retinal detachment.

TREATMENT:

Current technology allows retina specialists to identify and track the location and extent of retina damage, especially in the macula which is the most crucial area in the retina for visual acuity. Treatment includes the use of lasers to decrease retina edema and treat neovascular vessels and damaged tissue; injections of periocular and intravitreal steroids; and intravitreal injections of anti-VEGF medications that specifically target the damaging effect of hypoperfusion in the retina.

Goals of Coordinated Care Between the Primary Care Physician and Retina Specialist

- All patients with diabetes need evaluation by an ophthalmologist
- Encourage the relationship between the primary care physician and retina specialist to coordinate care for those with diabetic eye disease
- Provide lifelong evaluation and management of diabetic eye disease
- Treatment by a retina specialist in those patients suffering from diabetic retinopathy
- In patients with visual disability from diabetic retinopathy, provide visual rehabilitation services in conjunction with the retina specialist

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