



9 November 2016 – The International Diabetes Federation celebrates World Diabetes Day every year on 14 November. This year, the theme for the Day is Eyes on diabetes. The campaign focuses on promoting the importance of screening to ensure early diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes and treatment to reduce the risk of serious complications.

One of the most common complications of diabetes is retinopathy. This is a disease of the retina which results in impairment or loss of vision. Retinopathy is a serious complication that threatens sight in a large number of diabetic patients. Data show that:

nearly 50% of diabetic patients will develop some degree of retinopathy after 10 years.

80% of diabetic patients develop retinopathy after 15 years and amongst them, about 2% become blind and nearly 10% develop severe visual impairments.

Retinopathy can be prevented. Screening is important to ensure early diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes and treatment to reduce retinopathy as well as other serious complications, such as heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, impotence, amputations and infections.

Diabetes can best be managed at the primary health care level. Further effort is needed to integrate detection and management of diabetes into primary health care, which can be an entry point for the improved prevention, control and management of diabetic retinopathy as well as other serious complications. Evidence-based treatment is available and can significantly reduce the risks for blindness and moderate vision loss. Clinical studies spanning more than 30 years have shown that appropriate treatment can reduce these risks by more than 90%.

Diabetes is one of the four main noncommunicable diseases and together with cancer, heart attacks and strokes, and lung disease is responsible for 1.7 million deaths in the Eastern Mediterranean Region every year. Diabetes is a pandemic that remains hidden throughout most of the world, with up to half of all people with diabetes globally remaining undiagnosed. WHO projects that diabetes will be the 7th leading cause of death by 2030.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 43 million people have diabetes (Type 2 diabetes comprises some 90% of all cases). The potential impact of simple diet modifications and increased physical activity on preventing and improving diabetes is huge. Individuals and families, governments and civil society groups can all take action to change current unhealthy behaviours, in order to reduce diabetes and its complications.

Related resources

[World Diabetes Day 2017: Eyes on diabetes](#)

[World Health Day 2017: Beat diabetes](#)

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