For anyone living with diabetes, preventing vision loss should be a priority. One out of every three individuals with diabetes in the United States will develop diabetes-related retinopathy or macular edema, the leading causes of severe vision loss and blindness among working-age adults. However, early detection and treatment can lower the risk of blindness by 90%.

Since many patients with diabetes-related retinopathy and macular edema have no symptoms, an annual dilated eye exam or digital retinal imaging (photos of the eye taken with a special digital camera that is sent to an eye doctor for review) is recommended. Dilated eye exams are a cost-effective way to detect diabetes-related retinopathy and macular edema at an early and treatable stage. However, approximately 50% of patients are not getting their eyes examined or are diagnosed too late for treatment to be effective.

There are effective treatments for diabetes-related retinopathy and macular edema that can prevent further loss of vision, including eye injections, laser treatments, and surgery.

It is critical for diabetes prevention and management programs to integrate vision loss prevention and eye health promotion messages and strategies.

**PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:**
The Illinois Public Health Institute, in collaboration with the Chicago Department of Public Health, is working with nearly two dozen community partners to launch the Chicago Collaboration to Advance Reach, Equity, and Systems (Chicago CARES) to Prevent Diabetes. Funded through a five-year Centers for Disease Control and Prevention award, Chicago CARES is a multi-sector effort focused on expanding access to the National Diabetes Prevention Program (National DPP) and telehealth-enabled diabetes-related retinopathy screening in Chicago communities with a disproportionate diabetes burden. To learn more about the Chicago CARES project, visit [http://chicagocaresdpp.org/](http://chicagocaresdpp.org/).
INTEGRATING vision and eye health strategies into other programs and activities can improve quality of life for individuals with diabetes.

DIABETES HEALTH CAMPAIGNS:
Integrate messaging about vision and eye health into programs that promote diabetes health to diverse populations, including populations at high risk and communities of color.

HEALTHY AGING PROGRAMS:
Integrate vision screening and early detection activities, improve access to and use of eye care services, and incorporate eye health awareness messages into programs that promote healthy vision and active aging.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAMS:
Support caregivers by providing them with vision and eye health resources specifically for individuals with diabetes. These resources should include measures to prevent vision loss by receiving recommended eye care services. They should also include contact information for low vision rehabilitation programs to assist those with uncorrectable vision impairment.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:
Include information about the benefits of early detection and treatment for diabetes-related eye disease in training programs for professionals who promote diabetes health.

RESOURCES:
Building Public Health Capacity to Enhance Vision and Eye Health: A Toolkit for Public Health Agencies and Their Partners
This toolkit can help public health agencies and their partners assess the level of vision impairment in their communities, build effective partnerships, and implement effective and sustainable interventions to improve vision and eye health.
www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/programs/vision-toolkit.html

Diabetes and the Eyes Educational Toolkit
This toolkit (available in English and Spanish) offers educational materials on diabetes and the impact of diabetes on eye health. These educational resources are intended for health care professionals, community health educators, diabetes educators, and anyone in a caregiving or diabetes education role.
https://preventblindness.org/diabetes-and-the-eyes-educational-toolkit/

Retina International Diabetes-related Eye Disease Toolkit
This toolkit is designed for a multi-stakeholder audience supporting awareness and action on diabetes-related eye diseases.
http://retina-ded.org/

Healthy Eyes Presentation Series
This presentation series can build awareness about vision and eye health basics, common adult vision disorders, eye safety precautions, and proactive behaviors for a lifetime of healthy vision.
https://preventblindness.org/health-eyes-presentation-series/

Living Well With Low Vision
This online resource educates those with loss of vision on how to maintain their independence and quality of life.
https://lowvision.preventblindness.org/

Vision and Eye Health Surveillance System (VEHSS): A National Data System for Vision and Eye Health
Get the latest state and national data on vision and eye health.
www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/vehss/index.html

Vision Care Financial Assistance Information
This webpage is a list of contact information for organizations and services that provide financial assistance for vision care. Available in English and Spanish.
https://preventblindness.org/vision-care-financial-assistance-information/

For more information, go to: www.preventblindness.org.

REFERENCES