



FLORIDA EYE
Microsurgical Institute, Inc.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER IS DIABETIC EYE DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH

**LOCAL PALM BEACH COUNTY OPHTHALMOLOGIST STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF
ADHERING TO SPECIAL VISION GUIDELINES TO DIABETICS**

Boynton Beach, FL, November 3, 2009... There are approximately 29 million Americans age 20 and older that have diabetes and almost one third of those are at risk for vision loss because they do not know they have the disease.

Those numbers make Randy Katz, M.D., Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute's Retinal, Diabetic Retinopathy and Macular Degeneration Specialist very upset. "This is a tragedy waiting to happen because people with diabetes can develop diabetic retinopathy, a degenerative disease of the retina (the sensitive area at the back of the eye), which affects 5.3 million Americans age 18 and older," says Dr. Katz, who also happens to be the Ophthalmologic Specialist on Florida Governor Charlie Crist's State Diabetics Advisory Council.

According to Dr. Katz, "More than one third of those diagnosed with diabetes do not adhere to vision care guidelines by forgoing a dilated eye exam every year. So, as part of November's Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month, I, along with my fellow ophthalmologists across the country and The American Academy of Ophthalmology, am urging Americans with diabetes to get a dilated eye exam this year, and every year. Also - pregnant women with diabetes should have an eye exam in the first trimester, since diabetic eye disease can progress rapidly during pregnancy."

The longer a person has diabetes, the greater the risk for developing diabetic retinopathy, says Dr. Katz, who also points out that diabetic retinopathy does not only affect people who have

had diabetes for many years; it can also appear within the first year or two after the onset of the disease. For some people, diabetic retinopathy is one of the first signs of the disease.

High blood sugar levels can also weaken blood vessels in the eye's retina causing them to leak blood or fluid. This causes the retina to swell and can lead to vision loss. Blood sugar fluctuations can also promote growth of new, fragile blood vessels on the retina, which can break easily and leak blood into the vitreous (the clear, jelly-like substance that fills the center of the eye.) This can blur vision and lead to permanent vision impairment. High blood pressure and smoking can further damage blood vessels as well.

What are the signs to look for? Fluctuations in blood sugar levels can temporarily affect vision, so it's sometimes difficult to know if a serious eye problem is developing. That's one of the reasons strict control of a diabetic's blood sugar is so important, says Dr. Katz. "If a diabetic notices a vision change in one eye, a change that lasts more than a day or two or changes not associated with fluctuations in blood sugar, call your ophthalmologist immediately."

Dr. Katz suggests that if you or a loved one is diagnosed with diabetes, be sure to schedule a complete dilated eye exam once a year, or more often if suggested by your ophthalmologist. Obviously, adds Dr. Katz, "Don't smoke and keep your blood sugar under control through diet and exercise."

The Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute offers a full range of comprehensive ophthalmologic care, including routine eye care and examinations, pediatric eye care, dry eyes, advanced corneal, retinal and cataract procedures, laser treatments, glaucoma and diabetic procedures, and various other sophisticated treatments. With its own pediatric wing and fully accredited outpatient surgical center in Boynton Beach, the Institute has additional offices in Boca Raton, Wellington and Juno Beach.

Also at Florida Eye with Dr. Katz is Dr. Barry Schechter, the Institute's Refractive Cataract Surgery, Glaucoma, Cornea & External Disease Specialist, Dr. Lee Friedman, FL Eye's Pediatric, ROP & Adult Strabismus Specialist, Dr. Jonathan Chua, General Ophthalmology, and Dr. Jason Gorscak, Comprehensive Ophthalmology. For more information on Diabetes and Eye Care, the Institute, its physicians and current clinical trials, please contact Gwen Cohan at (561) 736-5050 and visit www.fleyedocs.com.