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Cataracts in Diabetic Patients

Diabetes has been identified as one of the greatest health concerns in rural areas. Complications resulting from diabetes include skin infections, visual impairment, and nerve damage. One of the earliest and most common complications of diabetes is visual impairment, including the development of cataracts. Up to 20% of all cataract procedures are estimated to be performed for diabetic patients. Symptoms of a cataract include cloudy or blurry vision, fading of colors, glare, poor night vision, and double vision or multiple images in one eye. If you experience any of these symptoms, consult your doctor. With early detection and treatment, visual improvement is likely and regular post-treatment retinal exams can help catch other visual problems before they become too serious. In fact, cataract surgery has a 98% success rate. By controlling your blood pressure and blood sugar, you may also help prevent cataracts or other problems with your vision. ◆

Did You Know?

- The global prevalence of diabetes mellitus worldwide is projected to rise from 171 million in 2000 to 366 million in 2030.
- Complications of diabetes include skin problems (e.g., skin infections and irritation), visual impairment (e.g., cataracts), kidney problems, and nerve damage.
- Diabetes contributes to the death of over 230,000 Americans annually.
- People with diagnosed diabetes have healthcare costs 2.3 times higher than what expenditures would be in the absence of diabetes.
- Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, accounting for 44% of all new cases.
- A cataract is a clouding that develops in the crystalline lens of the eye or in its lens capsule, varying in degree from slight to complete opacity, which obstructs the passage of light.
- Cataracts are a leading cause of blindness and affect approximately 18 million people globally.
- Cataracts occur at an earlier age and are 2-5 times more frequent in patients with diabetes.
- Cataracts typically progress slowly to cause vision loss, and are potentially blinding if left untreated. ◆



Emergency Medical Assistance Devices

The sudden onset of a medical emergency may make it difficult or impossible to physically call for help. Medical help alert buttons can assist and are able to be affixed to jewelry or throughout the home where they are linked to phone lines alerting an operator in the event of a fall, stroke, or other emergency. Options include two way voice recognition communication and motion detection capabilities. Several companies are currently manufacturing these units with a wide variety of options available. Devices differ in price, useable range from base, automatic fall detection, battery backup, and choice of contact options. There is an increasing demand for these devices in the "Baby Boomer" generation and has become a popular choice for both individuals at risk for falls or other medical emergencies as well as children of at-risk parents who give them as a gift for peace of mind. For those living in rural areas, these devices may be especially useful if you have few neighbors or other individuals who are able to check on you regularly. ◆

