

# Diabetes Patients Have Blindness Risks

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Diabetes is a serious health problem. Caused by the increase of sugar level in the blood, the disease needs to be treated well to prevent complications. One of the complications is diabetic retinopathy that may cause blindness.

Eye health expert from UGM, Prof.Dr.Suhardjo,S.U., Sp.M(K)., said diabetes is often named as the silent killer because the person that has it may not be aware of it. When they realise it, they already have complications.

“Diabetes may cause complications, third of those affect the eye such as diabetic retinopathy that can cause blindness,” he said on Wednesday (12/7) at Faculty of Medicine UGM.

In a talkshow themed *Eye Disorders due to Diabetes and Nutrition Intake Patterns*, Suhardjo said the diabetes may aggravate eye disorders. The disease may reduce the sensitivity of the cornea, reduction of nerve fibre density microscopically, and predisposition of ulcus neuropathy. Suhardjo called on patients to have eye checks because many of them are not aware of these risks.



“We suggest diabetes patients to have their eyes checked every six months or at least once a year,” he said.

Suhardjo said the survey done in Yogyakarta showed increasing prevalence of diabetic retinopathy each year. Tendency of increase goes along with age with the highest prevalence found in people aged 70. Between 2014-2015 prevalence of diabetic retinopathy was 43.1%.

“Diabetes mellitus is the main cause of eye disorders, hence risk factors need to be controlled and regular eye checks need to be taken.

UGM internist, dr.R. Bowo Pramono, Sp.PD., KEMD., said Indonesia ranks fourth in the world after India, China, and the US in diabetes prevalence. The WHO predicts the number especially for type 2 diabetes in Indonesia will increase up to 30.3 million in 2030.

Bowo emphasised the awareness of people to identify diabetes since the onset. Initial symptoms is weight loss due to inapparent reasons, hunger, and frequent urination, fatigue, drowsiness, wounds not healing, blurred vision, and erection dysfunction.

“If these symptoms occur, the patients need to go to the doctor soon. So do people that have diabetes risks, such as hypertension, dyslipidemia, coronary disease, or obesity,” he said.

Bowo said diabetes is an incurable disease but it can be controlled by healthy life style.

Related to diabetes control, nutritionist of UGM, Perdana S.T. Suyoto, M.Sc., Ph.D., emphasised the need to have diet with the amount, types, and schedules adjusted to the condition of each patient.

“The amount of intake is adjusted to the need of calories and nutrients of the patients,” he said.

The patients also need to avoid sugary food and opt for low glycemic index food such as fruit and vegetables. They are suggested to do slow cooking, steaming or boiling.

“The meal schedules can be done in stages, for example six times a day consisting of 3 main courses and 3 additional meals in between,” he said.

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