

Eye Health Campaign Highlights Leading Cause of Blindness in Diabetes

Celebrity chef, Andrew Rudd has joined Diabetes Ireland, NCBI-the National Sight Loss Agency, Fighting Blindness, the Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO), the Association of Optometrists Ireland (AOI) and Novartis to launch ***Eye Am What I Eat*** campaign. The campaign aims to raise awareness of diabetic macular edema (DME) a form of diabetic retinopathy that can have a severe effect on vision, causing significant sight loss. Diabetic retinopathy is a common complication of diabetes and is the leading cause of blindness in working-age adults in Ireland. In fact, Irish statistics show that on average, one person with diabetes goes blind in Ireland each week. In the early stages, diabetic retinopathy will not affect the sight, but if the changes get worse, eventually the sight will be affected.

Symptoms of diabetic retinopathy can include blurred vision and black spots or 'floaters' that appear to float in your eye. According to eye doctor Mark Cahill, spokesperson for the Irish College of Ophthalmologists and retinal specialist at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, *"If diabetic retinopathy is not detected in the early stages it can lead to vision impairment and even vision loss. Eating well and maintaining a healthy lifestyle are hugely important but it is also essential for anyone with diabetes to have their eyes screened annually in order to detect the signs of diabetic retinopathy as early as possible."*

So what do you know about eating for your eye health? Here's your chance to find out more and enter our Eye am What I Eat campaign competition.

To get involved, and to help raise awareness of DME and diabetic retinopathy, people are invited to simply develop a recipe for eye health, and include in the recipe one or more of the "Top 10 Foods for Eye Health" listed at www.eyeamwhatleat.ie

All recipes must be submitted at www.eyeamwhatleat.ie or via post to "Eye Am What I Eat" c/o Pembroke Communications, 5th Floor, Whitaker Court, Whitaker Square, Dublin 2 by **5pm on Monday 7th July.**

Four finalists will be shortlisted by the judging panel and invited to attend the final event on Monday 16th June at Medley, Andrew's private dining venue in Dublin City Centre, where the recipes will be prepared by Andrew and an overall winner will be selected. The event will be hosted by radio and TV personality, Ronan Collins, and prizes will include a 6 course tasting menu for the winner, and a 4 course meal for two for the runners-up, all prepared by Andrew Rudd at Medley.

Sinead Hanley, Senior Dietitian at Diabetes Ireland, explains *"Following a healthy lifestyle by taking regular physical activity and achieving a healthy weight through a balanced diet is the key to managing your diabetes and maintaining healthy eyes and reducing the risk of developing DME and diabetic retinopathy. It is also important to ensure people with diabetes get their eyes screened regularly."*

The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme, 'Diabetic RetinaScreen' offers free, regular diabetic retinopathy screening to all people with diabetes, aged 12 and older. Through the programme, people who are registered are invited to attend for screening. When people get the letter of invitation, they need to call the Freephone number listed on their letter to make an appointment. This will go a long way to maintaining healthy eyes and preventing vision loss in people with diabetes.

Anna Moran from Fighting Blindness also commented, *"This campaign is about empowering people to take positive steps to look after their vision health. Being diagnosed with a condition causing sight loss can be very difficult. The good news is that through regular and effective retina screening,*

diabetic retinopathy can be caught early and effectively treated. We hope that this campaign will encourage anyone with diabetes to take care of their eye health by participating in this excellent and helpful screening programme."

For further information on diabetic retinopathy and the risks associated with diabetes, please visit www.diabetes.ie

Top 10 Foods for Eye Health

Avocados; Carrots; Broccoli; Eggs; Spinach; Kale; Tomatoes; Sunflower Seeds; Garlic; Salmon

About Diabetic Macular Edema (DME) awareness campaign:

Diabetes Ireland, National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI), Fighting Blindness, the Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO), the Association of Optometrists Ireland (AOI) and Novartis are working together to support the DME awareness campaign. The campaign aims to raise awareness of Diabetic Macular Edema (DME), the most common form of Diabetic Retinopathy, highlight the importance of annual eye screening for people with diabetes and emphasise the benefits of eating for eye health.

About Diabetic Retinopathy and Diabetic Macular Edema:

Diabetic retinopathy is a common complication of diabetes. In the early stages, diabetic retinopathy will not affect the sight, but if the changes get worse, eventually the sight will be affected. Diabetic related sight loss is the most common form of blindness in people of working age. In about 10% of cases, diabetic macular edema (DME) may occur where blood vessels leak their contents into the macular region of the retina and this may cause a more rapid form of vision loss. The good news is that with regular and effective retina screening, DME can be caught early and treated effectively.

About "Diabetic RetinaScreen"

Diabetic RetinaScreen – The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme is a new, government-funded screening programme that offers free, regular diabetic retinopathy screening to people with diabetes aged 12 years and older. For further information visit www.diabeticretinascreen.ie or freephone 1800 45 45 55.