

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **VISION PROBLEMS MAY BE UNEXPECTED PART OF PREGNANCY**

### **TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT VISION CHANGES CAN HELP SAVE SIGHT**

**CHICAGO (March 27, 2007)** – With so much attention being paid lately to celebrities and their pregnancies, the issue of good prenatal care seems to become a secondary subject. The focus should be placed on educating all women on the effects that pregnancy can have on the body and the importance of healthy habits. While many women know to expect changes in their complexions, expanding waistlines and shoe sizes, they may not know of the possible vision changes that can occur during pregnancy. Women currently undergoing fertility treatments may also experience vision changes.

Because the cornea, the front of the eye where light enters, can thicken during pregnancy, some pregnant women may discover that their contact lenses have become uncomfortable. Women who wear glasses may also notice changes in vision. Fortunately, most women won't require a change in prescription and many find they can go back to their contacts once they have delivered or stopped breastfeeding.

Women can still have their eyes safely dilated while pregnant. Because of an increase in hormones, some may notice changes in their vision including refractive changes, dry eyes, puffy eyelids that obscure side vision and sensitivity to light due to migraine headaches. Some vision changes in pregnant women, such as blurred vision and seeing spots, may be signs of a more serious problem and should be discussed with a doctor immediately.

"Women who have any pre-existing eye conditions, like glaucoma, high blood pressure or diabetes, must let their eye doctor know that they are pregnant or planning to become pregnant so the doctor can monitor closely for any changes in vision," said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America.

As part of April's "Women's Eye Health and Safety Awareness Month," Prevent Blindness America offers the following information on what some women may experience during pregnancy:

#### **Refractive Changes**

During pregnancy, changes in hormone levels can alter the strength you need in your eyeglasses or contact lenses. Though a slight change is usually nothing to worry about, it's a good idea to discuss any vision changes with an eye doctor who can help you determine whether or not to update your prescription.

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## **Dry Eyes**

Some women experience dry eyes during pregnancy. This is usually temporary and goes away after delivery. The good news is that lubricating or rewetting drops are perfectly safe to use while you are pregnant or nursing. It's also good to know that contact lenses, contact lens solutions and enzymatic cleaners are safe to use while you are pregnant.

## **Migraine Headaches**

Migraine headaches linked to hormonal changes are very common among pregnant women. In some cases, painful migraine headaches make eyes feel more sensitive to light. If you are pregnant and suffering from migraines, be sure to talk to your doctor before taking any prescription or non-prescription migraine headache medications.

## **Diabetes**

There is an increased risk of developing diabetes during pregnancy. Blurred vision may indicate an elevation of blood sugar levels. All women who are pregnant or who are planning to become pregnant and have been diagnosed with diabetes should get a full, dilated eye exam.

## **High Blood Pressure**

In some instances, a woman may experience blurry vision or spots in front of her eyes while pregnant. These symptoms can be caused by an increase in blood pressure during pregnancy. At excessive levels, high blood pressure can even cause retinal detachment.

## **Implications for Unborn Child**

Cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug use pose enormous health risks to the unborn child, but vision disorders that can result are less publicized. These exposures, as well as other problems that lead to pre-term or low-birth weight infants, increase the risk of amblyopia (lazy eye), strabismus (crossed eyes) and significant refractive errors.

To request a free "Pregnancy and Your Vision" fact sheet or for more information on women's general eye health, please visit [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org) or call 1-800-331-2020.

## **About Prevent Blindness America**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screenings, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org).

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