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FDA approves Lucentis for diabetic retinopathy

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Lucentis is administered by a physician as an injection into the eye once a month. It is intended to be used along with appropriate interventions to control blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol.

Diabetic retinopathy is the most common diabetic eye disease and is a leading cause of blindness in adults in the United States.

"Diabetes is a serious public health crisis, affecting more patients every year," said Mr Edward Cox, director of the Office of Antimicrobial Products in the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "Today's approval gives patients with diabetic retinopathy and diabetic macular edema the first significant therapy to treat this vision-impairing complication."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), diabetes (type 1 and type 2) affects more than 29 million people in the United States and is the leading cause of new blindness among people ages 20 to 74 years.

In 2008, 33 percent of adults with diabetes aged 40 years or older had some form of DR.

In some cases of DR with DME, abnormal new blood vessels grow on the surface of the retina. Severe vision loss or blindness can occur if the new blood vessels break.