

Diabetes + Your Eyes

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which glucose levels in your blood (also known as blood sugar) are high. Blood glucose is your body's main source of energy and you get it from the food you eat. Your body makes a hormone called insulin that helps glucose from food you eat get into your cells to be used for energy. If you have diabetes, your body may not make enough insulin or any insulin or your body is not able to use insulin well. This causes glucose to stay in your blood and not get to your cells for energy.

Many people are able to live long and healthy lives with diabetes. You can manage diabetes through diet, exercise and taking medication as prescribed. Without management, the high glucose levels in your blood can cause damage to your heart, kidneys, feet, ears, and eyes. Staying healthy will make it easier for you to manage your diabetes and maintain good vision and eye health, allow you exercise, and follow the treatment advice of doctors.

What Is Diabetes-related Eye Disease?

If you have diabetes, prevention of eye diseases related to diabetes is a priority. Diabetes-related eye disease can cause you to have trouble reading, seeing faces across the room, seeing at night, or even blindness. There are two forms of diabetes-related eye disease:

- **Diabetes-related retinopathy** occurs when small blood vessels leak and bleed in the retina. The retina is layer of the eye that acts like the film in the camera of the eye to help you see. Diabetes-related retinopathy is a leading cause of blindness in American adults and it affects over one in four of those living with diabetes, while 4% have severe cases of retinopathy.

How Common is Diabetes?

You should know that you are not the only one out there living with diabetes. More than 30 million people in the United States have diabetes. One in four do not know they have diabetes. Diabetes is more common among certain populations such as African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

You are more likely to have diabetes if you are:

- 45 or older
- have a family history of the disease
- high blood pressure
- have excess weight

The good news is that you can manage diabetes by taking good care of yourself through healthy meal planning, regular exercise, and taking medication as prescribed.

Different words, same meaning.

The words below refer to the same condition and can be used interchangeably.

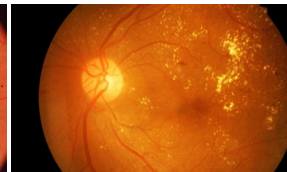
Diabetes-related eye disease = diabetic eye disease

Diabetes-related retinopathy = diabetic retinopathy

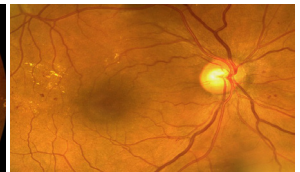
Diabetes-related macular edema = diabetic macular edema



Normal



Diabetes-related Retinopathy



Diabetes-related Macular Edema

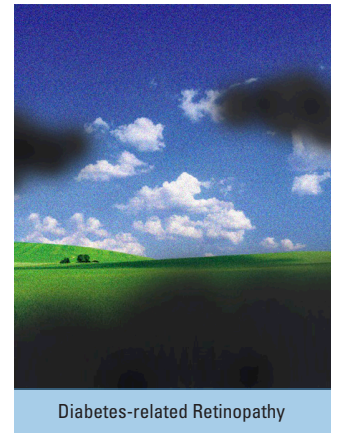
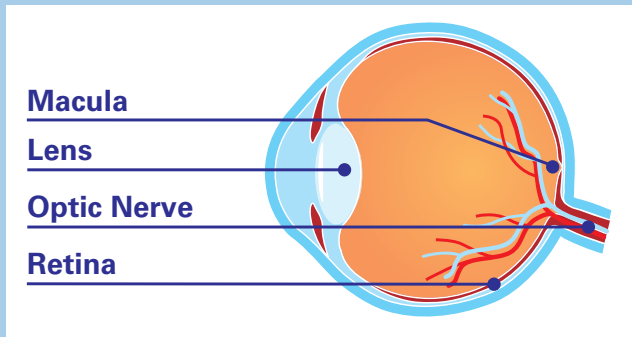
- **Diabetes-related macular edema** is a swelling that can occur with retinopathy. It occurs when the small blood vessels in the center of the retina, called the macula, become leaky and cause the retina to swell. It can cause your vision to become blurry.

The good news is that diabetes-related eye disease can often be prevented or managed with a healthy lifestyle and annual visits to an eye doctor.

What Other Eye Diseases Are Common Among People Living With Diabetes?

- **Cataract** is the clouding of the lens in the eye, which can cause vision to become blurry and colors to become dull. Generally, cataracts are treatable with surgery that can help restore your vision. Aside from aging, diabetes is the most common risk factor for cataract.
- **Glaucoma**, “the silent thief of sight,” causes damage to the optic nerve and possible loss of side vision, usually caused by an increase in fluid pressure inside the eye. Vision loss will start without any noticeable symptoms leading to tunnel vision. If left untreated, glaucoma can lead to permanent loss of vision. Once vision is lost to glaucoma, it cannot be restored. Medications and surgery can delay progression of this disease.

You can help to prevent these eye diseases with a healthy lifestyle and visiting an eye doctor annually.



For More Information:

Visit the following webpage for more information about diabetes-related eye disease, insurance information, financial assistance information, and healthy living choices to reduce your risk for eye disease:

Diabetes & Your Eyes Resources

www.preventblindness.org/diabetes.

KNOW YOUR ABCs OF DIABETES TO PROTECT YOUR EYE HEALTH

A

A1C:

Manage your blood glucose.
Have your A1C checked every 6 months.

B

BLOOD PRESSURE:

Manage your blood pressure to protect your heart, kidney, and eye health.

C

CHOLESTEROL:

Manage your cholesterol levels.

D

DON'T SMOKE:

Don't start smoking and if you smoke, quit.

E

EYES:

Get a comprehensive dilated eye exam annually.



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