

Diabetes + Your Eyes

Diabetes-related Retinopathy – Symptoms + Risks

What are the Symptoms of Diabetes-related Retinopathy?

Early detection and treatment can reduce your risk of diabetes-related retinopathy. You will usually not experience symptoms in the early stages, which is why it is important for you to have an eye exam annually, or as directed by your doctor. Eye exams can be done either through a dilated eye exam with an eye doctor (preferred method) or through photos of the retina in each eye, which may not require dilation of the eyes.

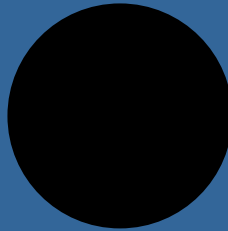
Vision changes due to diabetes-related eye disease usually affects both eyes. Here are some symptoms you can look for:



Sudden increase in eye floaters
(spots and/or dark cobweb-like strands)



Blurred vision



Sudden loss of vision in one eye



Halos around lights



Flashing lights



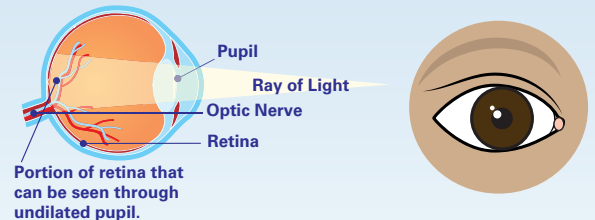
Poor night and color vision

Contact your eye doctor right away if you experience any of these symptoms.

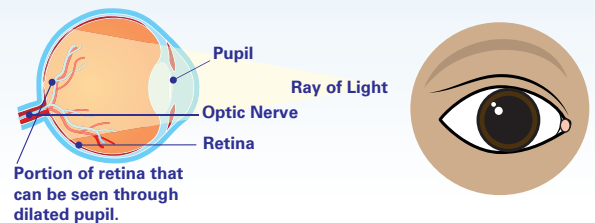
Why is a Dilated Eye Exam Important?

Dilation of the eyes is done using eye drops to widen the opening on the front of your eye, called the pupil. This allows the eye doctor to see into the back of the eye. This is an important step to take when getting an eye exam for people living with diabetes. The temporary side effects of dilation eye drops are blurring of vision, especially up close, and sensitivity to light. The side effects only last a few hours or less, but the benefit from the eye exam can be enormous!

UNDILATED PUPIL



DILATED PUPIL



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

What Decreases and Increases Your Risk for Diabetes-related Retinopathy?

If you have diabetes, there are different factors that can decrease and increase your risk for developing diabetes-related retinopathy. Your risk depends on:



Duration of the Disease: The longer you have diabetes, the greater your risk for developing diabetes-related retinopathy.



Blood glucose management: Blood glucose management will decrease your risk for diabetes-related retinopathy and vision loss. Work with your healthcare provider to be sure your glucose level is in your recommended target range.



Race: Some racial and ethnic groups are at higher risk. If you are African American, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander, you are at increased risk for developing diabetes-related retinopathy.



Smoking: Smoking increases your risk. If you don't smoke, be sure you do not start. If you do smoke, ask your doctor how to help you quit.



Blood pressure and cholesterol: By managing your blood pressure and cholesterol you will decrease your risk of eye disease. You will also protect your heart, kidneys, feet, ears, and eyes. Eat a healthy diet, get regular exercise and/or take medication as prescribed by your doctor to manage your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. These steps will help you reduce your risk of diabetes-related retinopathy.



Pregnancy: If you have diabetes prior to getting pregnant, see your eye doctor regularly to prevent risks of developing diabetes-related retinopathy. If you develop gestational diabetes during pregnancy, your risks are much lower and you are not required to get an eye examination.



Kidney Disease: There is a close relationship between kidney disease and diabetes-related retinopathy. Preventing complication with your kidneys will also help prevent diabetes-related retinopathy.

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.

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.



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