

Diabetes + Your Eyes

Diabetes-related Retinopathy – Diagnosis, Treatment, & Prevention

How is Diabetes-related Retinopathy Diagnosed?

If you have diabetes, you should have an eye exam which includes dilation at least once a year, or more often as recommended by your eye doctor (an ophthalmologist or optometrist). Your eye examination should include dilation. 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 effects only last a few hours or less, but the benefit can be enormous!

If for some reason you cannot fit in an annual dilated eye exam, work with your primary care doctor to have photos taken of your retina in each eye to screen for diabetes-related eye disease. These photos are examined by an eye doctor to determine if you might have diabetes-related eye disease. Your photos can be used to compare to images taken in past and future exams. This helps monitor the health of your eye to determine if you have retinopathy and need a complete dilated eye exam. Your eye doctor can then use the pictures to show you what is happening in your eye so, together, you can develop a treatment plan. Timely treatment of diabetes-related retinopathy can help reduce your risk for vision loss.

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

How is Diabetes-related Retinopathy Treated?

In the early stages of diabetes-related retinopathy, annual dilated eye exams (or more often as recommended by the eye doctor) are important for monitoring retinopathy.

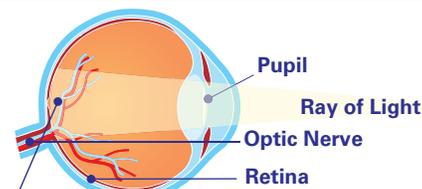
In more advanced stages, you have a range of options for treatment, including:

- medications
- laser procedures
- surgery

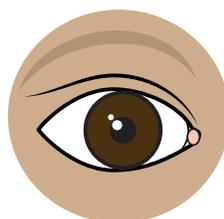
Talking with your eye doctor and working together on your treatment plan is the best way to determine the next steps that are right for you.

It is important that you know that damage in your retina often happens before you notice changes in your vision. Having a dilated eye exam annually (or at least retinal photographs evaluated by an eye doctor) is the best way to catch any eye disease in its early stage to ensure you have healthy vision. Your eye doctor will talk with you if you need an eye exam more than once a year and/or to discuss any treatment you may need.

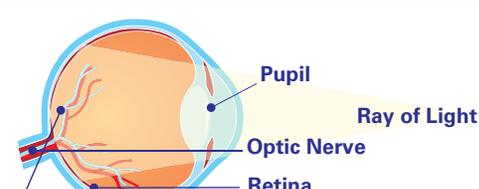
UNDILATED PUPIL



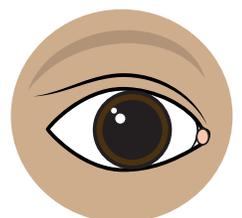
Portion of retina that can be seen through undilated pupil.

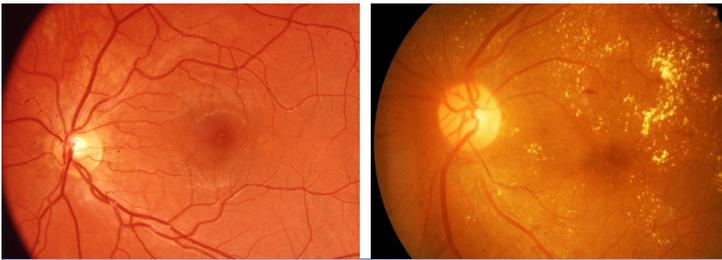


DILATED PUPIL



Portion of retina that can be seen through dilated pupil.





Normal

Diseased



How Can You Keep Your Eyes Healthy When You Have Diabetes?

- Know your numbers to manage your glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels.
- Get a dilated eye exam annually, or more often as recommended by the eye doctor. If you cannot get an eye exam annually, work with your primary health doctor to obtain photos of your retina in each eye. These photos are examined by an eye doctor to determine if you might have diabetes-related eye disease.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle. This should include regular exercise, not smoking, and following a healthy meal plan. Talk to a dietitian or diabetes educator about your eating habits and creating an exercise routine. There are a lot of wonderful recipes and fitness resources to help you!

Optometrists and Ophthalmologists are Both Eye Doctors. What is the Difference?

An optometrist is an eye doctor who has earned the Doctor of Optometry (OD) degree. Optometrists can perform eye exams, prescribe eyeglasses and contact lenses, diagnose disease, prescribe medications to treat certain eye problems and diseases, and may also provide your pre- and post-operative care if you have eye surgery performed by an ophthalmologist.

An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor (MD) or an osteopathic doctor (DO). Ophthalmologists are trained to perform eye exams, write prescriptions for eyeglasses and contact lenses, diagnose and treat disease, prescribe medications, and perform eye surgery.

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/diabetic-eye-disease.



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