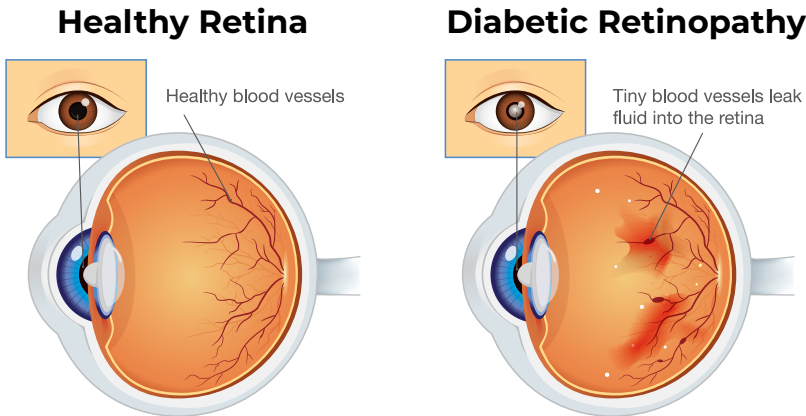


What You Need to Know About Diabetic Retinopathy



Diabetic retinopathy is an eye condition that affects people with diabetes. Over time, too much sugar in your blood can damage the tiny blood vessels in your retina. These damaged blood vessels cause spots or blurry vision. **If diabetic retinopathy is not diagnosed and treated, it can cause blindness.** It is a very serious condition, but the good news is

you can take steps to help protect your eyesight.



How Do You Know If You Have Diabetic Retinopathy?

There are **no symptoms** in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy. At later stages, you may have blurry or patchy vision, or blindness.

It is critical that everyone with diabetes get a comprehensive dilated eye exam every year to check for diabetic retinopathy.

What Is a Comprehensive Eye Exam?

A comprehensive dilated eye exam is more than a test of your eyesight, although that will be tested, too. The comprehensive dilated eye exam shows the physical state of the eye itself. You will need to see an optometrist or ophthalmologist who has special equipment to look into your eye and view your retina.

The doctor will place drops into your eyes to dilate (widen) your pupils, which makes it easier to see more of your retina. After your eyes are dilated, there are 3 different tests your doctor may perform (make sure you have someone to drive you to and from the doctor's office):

FP fundus photography

FA fluorescein angiography

OCT optical coherence tomography

The FP and FA take pictures of your retina to see if blood vessels are closed, broken, or leaking. The OCT shows a cross-section of the retina to see if any fluid has leaked into the retinal tissue. The optometrist or ophthalmologist will be able to tell if you have diabetic retinopathy from these test results.

African American Individuals



>850,000 currently have diabetic retinopathy

>1 million may have diabetic retinopathy by 2030

Hispanic Individuals



>1 million currently have diabetic retinopathy

>3 million may have diabetic retinopathy by 2030

What You Should Know



Everyone with diabetes is at risk for diabetic retinopathy



The longer you have diabetes, the greater the risk of diabetic retinopathy



Uncontrolled diabetes increases the risk of diabetic retinopathy

There are no early symptoms. The only way to know if you have diabetic retinopathy is to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

95%

of severe vision loss from diabetic retinopathy can be prevented by early diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.

What You Can Do

Protect your vision by getting a comprehensive dilated eye exam every year.

Stay on TRACK



T Take your medications



R Reach and maintain a healthy weight



A Add physical activity to your daily routine



C Control your ABCs:
A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels



K Kick the smoking habit

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- How are diabetes and eye health related?
- What type of eye care specialist should I see?
- What kind of eye exam do I need?
- How often do I need an eye exam?
- Does my insurance cover the costs of the eye exam?



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