

Diabetes eye care

Description

Diabetes can harm your eyes. It can damage the small blood vessels in your retina, which is the back part of your eye. This condition is called diabetic retinopathy. Diabetes also increases your risk of having glaucoma, cataracts, and other eye problems.

If you have diabetes, work with your health care provider to take good care of your eyes.

Diabetes and Your Eyes

If you have diabetes, you may not know there is any damage to your eyes until the problem is very bad. Your provider can catch problems early if you get regular eye exams.

If your provider finds eye problems early, medicines and other treatments may help prevent them from getting worse.

You Need Regular Eye Exams

Every year, you should have an eye exam by an eye doctor (ophthalmologist or optometrist). Choose an eye doctor who takes care of people with diabetes.

Your eye exam may include:

- Dilating your eyes to allow a good view of the entire retina. Only an eye doctor can do this exam.
- At times, special photographs of your retina may replace the dilated eye exam. This is called digital retinal photography.

Your eye doctor may ask you to come more or less often than once a year depending on the eye exam results and how well your blood sugar is controlled.

How to Prevent Eye Problems

Control your blood sugar levels. High blood sugar increases your chance of having eye problems.

High blood sugar can also cause blurred vision that is not related to diabetic retinopathy. This kind of blurred vision is caused by having too much sugar and water in the lens of the eye, which is in front of the retina.

Control your blood pressure:

- Blood pressure less than 140/90 is a good goal for people with diabetes. Your provider may tell you that your pressure needs to be lower than 140/90.
- Have your blood pressure checked often and at least twice each year.
- If you take medicines to control your blood pressure, take them as your doctor instructs.

Control your cholesterol levels:

triglycerides. Take the medicines as directed.

Do not smoke. If you need help quitting, ask your provider.

If you already have eye problems, ask your provider if you should avoid exercises that can strain the blood vessels in your eyes. Exercises that may make eye problems worse include:

- Weight lifting and other exercises that make you strain
- High-impact exercise, such as football or hockey

Make it Easier for Yourself at Home

If your vision is affected by diabetes, make sure your home is safe enough that your chance of falling is low. Ask your provider about having a home assessment done. For people with diabetes, the combination of poor vision and nerve problems in the legs and feet can affect balance. This increases the chance of falling.

If you cannot read the labels on your medicines easily:

- Use felt tip pens to label medicine bottles, so you can read them easily.
- Use rubber bands or clips to tell medicine bottles apart.
- Ask someone else to give you your medicines.
- Always read labels with a magnifying lens.
- Use a pillbox with compartments for days of the week and times of the day, if you need to take medicines more than once a day.
- Ask for a special glucose meter with a larger display or one that reads out your blood glucose value.

Never guess when taking your medicines. If you are unsure of your doses, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

Keep medicines and other household items organized in a cabinet so you know where they are.

To make foods that are on your diabetes meal plan:

- Use large-print cookbooks
- Use a full-page magnifier
- High-definition (HD) magnifier
- For online recipes, use the zoom function on your keyboard to make the font bigger on your monitor
- Ask your eye doctor about other low vision aids

When to Call the Doctor

Call your provider if you have any of the following:

- Cannot see well in dim light
- Have blind spots
- Have double vision (you see two things when there is only one)
- Vision is hazy or blurry and you cannot focus
- Eye pain

- Spots floating in your eyes
- Cannot see things on the side of your field of vision
- See shadows

Alternative Names

Diabetic retinopathy - care

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