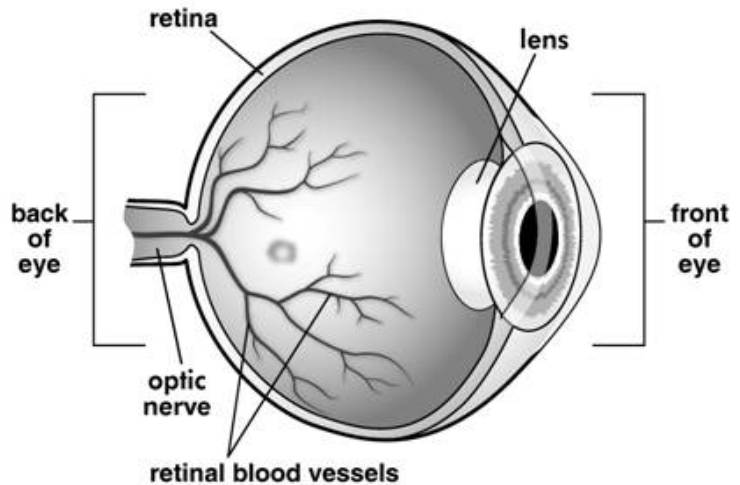


Diabetes and Eye Problems

If you have diabetes, you need to take care of your eyes because over time high blood sugar can damage your eyes. Many people with type 2 diabetes have high blood sugar for months or years before they are tested and found to have diabetes. Others get tested for diabetes because they have vision changes.



Visit your eye doctor for a dilated eye exam each year, even if you have no eye problems. Your eye doctor can find problems early, before you have any signs. Early treatment may prevent more serious eye problems.

Eye Problems

- **Retinopathy:** When the blood vessels in the back of the eye, called the retina, become damaged.
- **Cataracts:** When a film of skin grows over the lens in the eye.
- **Glaucoma:** When the pressure inside the eye gets too high and damages the optic nerve.

Signs of Eye Problems

Damage can occur to your eyes, but it may not cause vision changes for some time. If you have any of these signs, call your doctor to schedule an eye exam:

- Loss of side (peripheral) vision
- Blurry vision
- Eye pain or discomfort
- Double vision
- Loss of central vision
- Seeing spots or “floaters”
- Hard to see at night or dim vision
- Problems with glare or light

Why does diabetes cause eye problems?

High blood sugar over time with diabetes can cause damage to blood vessels, including the small blood vessels in your eyes. If you also have high blood pressure, this can further damage the blood vessels.

Keep your blood sugar and blood pressure as close to normal as you can to prevent eye problems. See your doctor to have your eyes checked each year so problems can be found early and treated.

Testing

Have an eye exam every year. Visit the eye doctor more often if you already have signs of eye problems. Treatment will depend on your needs. These tests may be done to check your eyes:

- Vision test: Your ability to read close up or at a distance is checked. Your light sensitivity and side vision, also called peripheral vision, may also be checked.
- Dilated eye test: A small amount of medicine is dropped into your eyes so your doctor can look at the back of your eyes.
- Eye pressure test: Medicine is used to numb the eyes and then your eyes' pressure is checked.
- Retinal test: Pictures are taken of the inside of the eye to check the blood vessels of the retina and optic nerve.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the eye problem, but it could include eye drops, laser treatment or surgery.

Managing Your Diabetes

Manage your diabetes to prevent eye and other health problems. Work with your doctor, nurse and dietitian to learn more about living well with diabetes.

- Follow your meal plan and talk with a dietitian.

- Learn how to check and record your blood sugar levels, also called glucose levels. Know the signs for high and low blood sugar levels.
- Exercise for 30 minutes at least 3 times a week.
- Take insulin or other diabetes medicines as directed by your doctor, nurse or diabetes educator.
- Have plans in place if your blood sugar levels drop too low. Be sure you have family members or others around you who know how to help you if you are not able to help yourself.
- Avoid tobacco and alcohol, manage stress and get enough sleep.
- Check your blood pressure every few months. If you have high blood pressure called hypertension, take your blood pressure medicine as ordered by your doctor. You may also want to check your blood pressure with a home blood pressure monitor, so you know if your medicine is keeping your blood pressure controlled.

Talk to your doctor, nurse or diabetes educator if you have any questions or concerns.