

Diabetes without Retinopathy

This material will help you understand how diabetes affects the eyes, and how to protect your eyes from long term damage.

How does diabetes affect my eyes?

Diabetes (both Type 1 and Type 2) affects your body's ability to use and store sugar. Prolonged diabetes can cause problems for many areas in your body, including the eyes. If blood sugar levels change quickly, fluid can build up in the lens of the eye. The lens is the outer part of the eye that helps you focus and see clearly. A change in the shape of the lens will cause vision to become blurry.

Diabetes can also cause changes to the retina. The retina is the part of the eye that captures images and sends them to the brain to see. In the early stages of diabetes, the retina may not yet be affected. This is called diabetes without retinopathy.

Blurred vision may be a sign of a more serious eye problem. These problems can cause permanent eye damage if not treated. Even with no symptoms, diabetes can be damaging your eye. It is difficult to know if your diabetes has damaged the retina until your eye doctor finds signs during your regular eye exam.

How can I correct vision problems related to diabetes?

It is important to visit your primary care doctor regularly to help manage and control your diabetes. You may improve your chances of maintaining good vision by following what your primary care doctor recommends:

- Keep your blood sugar within the normal range (70-130 mg/dL before meals, and less than 180 mg/dL after meals)
- Reach your Hemoglobin A1C target (an estimate of your blood sugar level over the last 3 months)

What else can I do to protect my eyes?

For people living with diabetes, management and control of blood sugar is the best way to save the eyes from more serious damage. It is also good to keep your blood pressure and cholesterol levels under control. Eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly should help you do these things.

You should also see your eye doctor regularly so that any problems can be found early and treated. Doctors recommend that everyone with diabetes have a complete dilated eye exam once a year.

For more information, scan this code with your smartphone or visit the website listed.



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/living/diabetes.cfm>

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Author: Kathleen Koviak, MPH Candidate
Reviewers: Devon Ghodasra, MD and Gale Oren, MILS

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