

How does diabetes affect your eyes?

Did you know that diabetes can affect your eyes? If diabetes isn't well controlled with a doctor's help, it can cause problems that can lead to vision loss. Eye problems that are caused by diabetes are called diabetic eye disease.

Diabetic eye disease includes:

- Diabetic retinopathy
- Diabetic macular edema (DME)
- Cataracts
- Glaucoma

What's the link between diabetes and your eyes?

When blood sugar is too high, it can change or damage the delicate blood vessels in the eyes. This can lead to too much pressure in the eye, bleeding in the eye or swelling in some of the eye's important tissues. Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness for adults ages 20 through 74.

Diabetic eye disease is dangerous because many people don't know they have it. These eye problems may have no signs or symptoms at first. Then, a person may start to lose their vision after eye damage has already occurred. Unfortunately, it is harder to treat these problems at a later stage.

The good news

Diabetes can be controlled. When you have good control over your diabetes and blood sugar, you can manage or avoid diabetic eye disease.



You control your diabetes by:

- Taking your medications as prescribed by your doctor
- Monitoring blood sugar levels
- Getting regular exercise
- Eating a healthy diet
- Working toward a healthy weight
- Not smoking
- Getting a full eye exam at least once a year, including an exam that includes dilating of the eyes

The diabetes ABCs are important measures of good diabetes control. Your ABCs are:

- **A = A1C**, which is a blood sugar (glucose) measurement. Your doctor can test this. Most people should have an A1C below 7 percent. This should be checked every 3-6 months.
- **B = Blood pressure**, which should be checked at each doctor appointment. Discuss your blood pressure target with your doctor.
- **C = Cholesterol**, which may need to be checked yearly or more often. Ask your doctor about a healthy cholesterol goal.

Getting regular checkups and following your doctor's recommendations for managing your diabetes will greatly reduce your risk of these problems. Most people with well-controlled diabetes can keep their eyes healthy.

Sources: American Diabetes Association, National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases