



DIABETES AND YOU: Healthy Eyes Matter!

It is important to take good care of your eyes when you have diabetes. Did you know that diabetes can harm your eyes? The good news is that you can take steps to help keep your eyes healthy. The tips below will get you started.

Tips to Keep Your Eyes Healthy

1. **Get a dilated eye exam at least once a year and share the results with your primary care doctor.**
 - In this exam, you will get eye drops to make your pupils larger. Pupils are the black circles in the middle of your eyes. The drops are painless and help your eye doctor see inside your eyes to look for signs of health problems.
 - A dilated eye exam can help your eye doctor find and treat problems to keep you from losing your vision from diabetes.
 - Your eye doctor may take pictures of your eyes with a tool called retinal photography. This helps to see the retina, which is at the back part of your eyes.
 - Be sure to keep your next eye doctor appointment!
2. **Visit your eye doctor right away if you:**
 - See little black lines or spots that don't go away.
 - See any red spots.
 - See red fog.
 - Have a sudden change in how clearly you see.
 - Take longer than usual to adjust to darkness.



How Can Diabetes Harm Your Eyes?

- Diabetes is the main cause of blindness among people younger than 74 years.
- Serious eye problems happen more often among people with diabetes.
- It is important to find and treat eye problems early to protect your vision.

Where Do I Get a Dilated Eye Exam?

- You should schedule an appointment with an ophthalmologist or an optometrist for your yearly dilated exam. Both of these eye doctors can give you a dilated eye exam and check your eyes.



What Kinds of Eye Diseases Are Common Among People With Diabetes?

- **Retinopathy** causes small blood vessels in the retina (at the back of the eye) to get weak and possibly leak blood. This disease can cause blindness if it is not treated. There are no symptoms when this disease starts, so it is important to get your eyes checked regularly.
- **Cataract** causes a “clouding” of the lens of the eye that makes vision blurry. People with diabetes are more likely to get cataracts.
- **Glaucoma** causes pressure in the eye. If it is not treated, glaucoma can cause vision loss or blindness.



To-do List for Healthy Eyes

- Get a dilated eye exam from your eye doctor at least once a year.
- Keep your next eye doctor appointment.
- Keep track of and tell your eye doctor about any changes in how you see.
- Talk with your eye doctor about the best ways to keep your eyes healthy.
- Ask your eye doctor to send your test results to your other doctors after every visit.
- Keep your blood sugar at a healthy level.

Manage Your ABCs!

Ask your health care team to help you set and reach goals to manage your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol—also known as the **ABCs** of diabetes. Teach your family about your diabetes and the **ABCs** so they can help you, too.

- **A1c:** The goal set for many people is less than 7% for this blood test, but your doctor might set different goals for you.
- **Blood pressure:** High blood pressure causes heart disease. The goal is less than 140/90 mmHg for most people, but your doctor might set different goals for you.
- **Cholesterol:** LDL or “bad” cholesterol builds up and clogs your blood vessels. HDL or “good” cholesterol helps remove the “bad” cholesterol from your blood vessels. Ask what your cholesterol numbers should be.
- **Don’t smoke:** Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for support.

National Diabetes Education Program

For more information, call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) or TTY 1-888-232-6348 or visit www.cdc.gov/info.
To order resources, visit www.cdc.gov/diabetes/ndep.

