

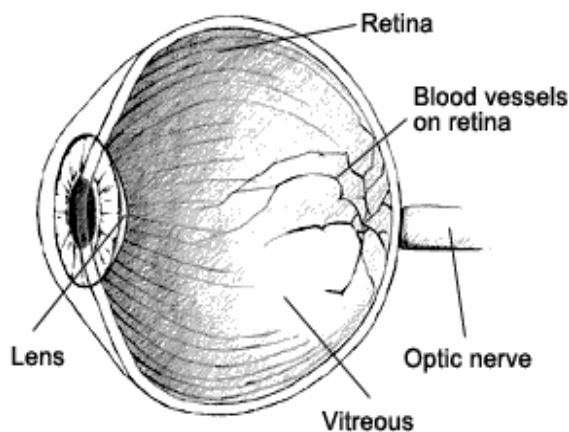
# Seeing the World Through Different Eyes

Uncontrolled or poorly controlled Diabetes can lead to changes in your vision. First we will learn how it damages the eye and then we will learn how to prevent this major complication of diabetes.

## What are diabetes problems?

Too much glucose in the blood for a long time can cause diabetes problems. This high blood glucose, also called blood sugar, can damage many parts of the body, such as the heart, blood vessels, eyes, and kidneys. Heart and blood vessel disease can lead to heart attacks and strokes. You can do a lot to prevent or slow down diabetes problems.

High blood glucose and high blood pressure from diabetes can hurt four parts of your eye:



- **Retina.** The retina is the lining at the back of the eye. The retina's job is to sense light coming into the eye.
- **Vitreous.** The vitreous is a jelly-like fluid that fills the back of the eye.
- **Lens.** The lens is at the front of the eye. The lens focuses light on the retina.
- **Optic nerve.** The optic nerve is the eye's main nerve to the brain.

Retina damage happens slowly. Your retinas have tiny blood vessels that are easy to damage. Having high blood glucose and high blood pressure for a long time can damage these tiny blood vessels. First, these tiny blood vessels swell and weaken. Some

blood vessels then become clogged and do not let enough blood through. At first, you might not have any loss of sight from these changes. **Have a dilated eye exam once a year even if your sight seems fine.**

One of your eyes may be damaged more than the other. Or both eyes may have the same amount of damage.

Diabetic **retinopathy** is the medical term for the most common diabetes eye problem.

As diabetes retina problems get worse, new blood vessels grow. These new blood vessels are weak. They break easily and leak blood into the vitreous of your eye. The leaking blood keeps light from reaching the retina.

You may see floating spots or almost total darkness. Sometimes the blood will clear out by itself. But you might need surgery to remove it.

Over the years, the swollen and weak blood vessels can form scar tissue and pull the retina away from the back of the eye. If the retina becomes detached, you may see floating spots or flashing lights.

You may feel as if a curtain has been pulled over part of what you are looking at. A detached retina can cause loss of sight or blindness if you don't take care of it right away.

Call your eye care professional right away if you are having any vision problems or if you have had a sudden change in your vision.

You may not have any signs of diabetes retina damage, or you may have one or more signs:

- blurry or double vision
- rings, flashing lights, or blank spots
- dark or floating spots
- pain or pressure in one or both of your eyes
- trouble seeing things out of the corners of your eyes

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# Diabetes and You

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE YOUR RISK OF EYE COMPLICATIONS

- Be active a total of 30 minutes most days. Ask your doctor what activities are best for you.
- Take your medicines as directed.
- Check your blood glucose at least every day. Each time you check your blood glucose, write the number in your record book.
- Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, sores, swelling, redness, or sore toenails.
- Brush and floss your teeth every day.
- Control your blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Don't smoke.
- Follow the healthy eating plan that you and your doctor or dietitian have worked out.
- Have a dilated eye exam every year.

For more information, visit our website at [www.doctorsdirecthealthcare.net](http://www.doctorsdirecthealthcare.net).

You may call us at 1-877-503-0388. Ask to speak to one of our nurses. We look forward to talking to you.

*Keeping You Healthy is our  
Number One Priority!*