



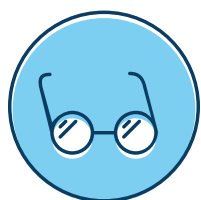
Keep Your Vision Clear

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How to Protect Your Eyes From Diabetes-Related Vision Changes

Among the numerous health complications that diabetes can bring—heart disease, poor circulation, kidney problems, nerve damage—**loss of vision ranks high on the list**. Glaucoma, cataracts and other eye diseases tend to occur earlier and more frequently in those with diabetes. In fact, the risk of vision impairment in people with diabetes is **25 times higher than in those without diabetes**.

However, there are **two key ways to reduce your risk of diabetes-related vision problems**. One, keep your blood sugar under control. Two, get regular eye exams at least every two years even if nothing seems wrong with your vision.



How Vision Loss Can Occur

In people with diabetes, high glucose can change fluid levels and cause swelling in the tissues in your eyes that

help them focus, leading to blurry vision. This can happen even in the short term, with glucose levels that are only temporarily high, although the blurriness usually dissipates when blood sugar is back in a normal range.

However, high glucose levels that continue over a longer period of time can **potentially lead to serious vision loss** due to a number of conditions, including:

Diabetic Retinopathy

This is the **leading cause of blindness** in American adults. It occurs when unregulated high blood sugar, over time, causes changes in the retina's blood vessels, which in turn causes fluid to leak into retinal tissue, potentially causing scarring of the retina or even retinal detachment.

It's important to note that **it is possible to have diabetic retinopathy in its early stages and still have 20/20 vision**, which is why regular visits to the ophthalmologist are so crucial.

Diabetic Macular Edema

The macula is the center of your retina, the part that gives you sharp central vision. Diabetic Macular Edema (DME) occurs when the macula swells due to leaking fluid, **causing blurriness, wavy vision and color changes**.



Did You Know?

According to the National Eye Institute, about **1 in 15 people with diabetes will develop** Diabetic Macular Edema.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that damage the optic nerve due to elevated intraocular pressure. In the case of diabetic retinopathy, new blood vessels form on the iris—the colored part of the eye—and pressure increases on the optical nerve. **People with diabetes are about twice as likely to develop glaucoma as those without the disease.**

Cataracts

Cataracts—which occur when the lenses in your eyes become cloudy from proteins that build up over a long period of time—are so common as to be almost universal. **By age 65, more than 90% of people in America will have developed them.** But if you have diabetes, this build-up of proteins can occur at a much younger age.

The Good News

Diabetes-related vision issues are generally treatable. **Here's how to stay on top of prevention and management.**



Healthy diabetes management comes first. That means healthy eating, regular exercise, quitting smoking, and getting your A1C, blood pressure and cholesterol regularly checked. It also means continuing to take medication

as prescribed. Studies have shown that using glucose-lowering medication can **reduce the risk of diabetic retinopathy by 25%.**



There are treatments available. Replacing cataracts with **new lenses** is commonplace and can lead to sharply **improved vision.** **Steroids** can reduce retinal swelling and a process called

anti-VEGF (vascular endothelial growth factor) therapy, which involves injecting medication into the eye, can stop blood vessels from leaking. **Laser therapy** can also seal or destroy leaking blood vessels.



A pupils-dilated eye exam at least every two years is important.

According to the Centers for Diseases Control (CDC), **more than 90% of diabetes-related vision loss can be**

avoided with early detection and treatment. If your eye exam results are normal, you can continue to visit your eye doctor every two years, but if the results are abnormal, you should be re-examined at least once per year. Importantly, if you have any **new or unusual symptoms**—blurry or double vision, eye pain, floaters, flashing lights, red eyes—**call your eye doctor right away.**

Emotional Support



According to a study published by National Institute of Health, **vision issues related to diabetes**, such as the potential loss of eyesight due to diseases like diabetic retinopathy, can be extremely distressing. Blindness that affects your ability to work and support your family is especially difficult to manage.

That's why **it's important for family members**, as well as physicians, to acknowledge these concerns and avoid language that may shame a person with diabetes for, say, not managing his or her diabetes better. (Diabetic retinopathy often occurs in people who have had diabetes for a long time, no matter how well their glucose levels are maintained.)

If you or someone you know is experiencing potential vision loss due to diabetes, **please make sure to seek out support.**

Sources: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/diabetes-and-your-eyes-what-you-need-to-know> | <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/diabetes-complications/diabetes-and-vision-loss.html> | <https://diabetes.org/health-wellness/eye-health/vision-loss-diabetes> | <https://www.healthline.com/health/diabetes/blurry-vision#cataracts> | <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/hcp/clinical-guidance/promote-eye-health.html> | <https://www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/diabetic-eye-disease> | <https://eyecaresite.com/2021/09/impact-of-diabetes-on-vision/> | <https://www.eyecentersurgeons.com/the-facts-on-cataracts/#...text=By%20age%2065%2C%20more%20than%20that%20build%20up%20over%20time>

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