



Seeing Your Way to Timely Eye Care

When you have type 2 diabetes, high blood sugar and high blood pressure can damage your eyes in ways that can't be reversed. You can help prevent harm by taking action now. Three of the most common vision problems are:

Diabetic Retinopathy

Your retina is the lining at the back of your eyeball. Over a long period of time, the tiny blood vessels that are essential to how the retina works can swell, weaken, and then clog. Your vision may be fine for years while the damage is building up. One eye may be affected before the other.

New blood vessels that grow to replace the damaged ones tend to leak blood into the jellylike fluid that fills the back of your eye. When this happens, you may see little dark spots or specks that float as you move your eyes. Or you may see almost total darkness. The blood could clear up on its own or require surgery.

As the damage gets worse over time, part of the retina can detach, potentially causing a veil over part of your field of vision. If a damaged retina affects your vision, go to your eye doctor right away. Surgery, which can usually be performed in a specialist's office using a laser beam, may be necessary.

Cataracts

The lens of your eye focuses light on your retina. A cataract clouds over the lens and makes everything in your field of vision appear cloudy. Surgery is required to remove the cataract and implant a permanent plastic lens into your eye. The surgery helps you see more clearly.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma results from pressure that damages the optic nerve, your eye's main nerve. When that happens, you first lose sight from the sides of your eyes. There are special drops you can get from your eye care doctor to use daily to lower the pressure in your eye. Or, he or she might recommend laser surgery.

Here's how you can prevent eye problems

Keep your blood glucose and blood pressure as close to normal as you can

In a study, people who kept their blood sugar close to normal developed diabetic retinopathy only a quarter of the time as opposed to those receiving standard diabetes treatment. For people who already had diabetic retinopathy, the condition got worse only half as often as in the group receiving standard diabetic treatment. High blood pressure can affect your vision by damaging the small blood vessels that are so important to proper eye function.



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Catch eye problems early

Act immediately when you notice a sudden change in your vision. Call your eye care doctor right away.

Quit smoking

Helping to slow damage to your vision is one more reason, in a long list of excellent reasons, to quit.

See an eye doctor for an eye exam every year

It's not enough to have your primary care doctor examine your eyes. Early treatment of eye problems by an eye doctor, specifically an ophthalmologist, can help save your precious sight.

Remember to call your eye care doctor immediately if you have problems with your vision. Signs of eye damage related to type 2 diabetes include blurry or double vision, pain, pressure, and difficulty seeing things near the edge of your field of vision.

If you have any sudden change in your vision, call your eye doctor immediately.

For more information about diabetes, please visit JourneyForControl.com.

