

Eye Health: **Frequently Asked Questions**

Read these FAQs to better understand the connection between diabetes and eye health.

Q: How does diabetes affect vision?

When your blood glucose (blood sugar) levels are above target range, over time, this can lead to diabetes-related eye disease. Diabetes affects your blood vessels, including the blood vessels in your eyes. As the blood vessels in the back of your eye are weakened, they can start to leak, resulting in blurry or cloudy vision, which is called diabetes-related retinopathy. Diabetes-related eye disease can cause vision loss.

Diabetes is the leading cause of vision loss in people 18–64 years old—and there are often no obvious signs or symptoms. But the great news is, an annual dilated and comprehensive eye exam or retinal photography could help you find out about diabetes-related eye disease so you can take steps to prevent vision loss.

Q: How is diabetes-related eye disease detected?

Diabetes-related eye disease is detected through a comprehensive eye exam that requires dilation or retinal photography. It's important to know about signs of eye disease early on. Finding out about eye disease, treating it early, and following up to make sure your treatments are working are all key to preventing vision loss.

Q: How is diabetes-related eye disease treated?

Taking steps to manage your blood glucose levels and blood pressure helps to slow the progression of diabetes-related eye disease.

Treating eye disease depends on the eye problems you have—options may include eye injections, laser treatment, or surgery.

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Q: Who is at risk of developing diabetes-related eye disease?

Anyone with any type of diabetes is at risk of developing diabetes-related eye disease.

The longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to develop eye complications. People living with high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and who smoke tobacco, are also at higher risk of developing diabetes-related eye disease.

Q: What are the symptoms of diabetes-related eye disease?

You may not always have symptoms. Most people should have an eye exam every year. If you have symptoms, these may include blurred or distorted vision, flashes of light, floaters (seeing small spots “floating” in your field of vision), impaired colors, or vision loss.

Talk to your eye doctor (optometrist or ophthalmologist) if you have any of these symptoms.

Q: How is vision loss prevented?

An eye exam will let your eye doctor monitor the health of your eyes and start to treat it if problems appear. If diabetes-related eye disease is diagnosed quickly, treatment is easier and more likely to be effective. You can also:

- Manage your blood glucose
- Work with your health care team to manage both your blood pressure and cholesterol levels and reach your targets.
- If you smoke, get help to quit (call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or visit **cdc.gov/Quit**)
- Get regular physical activity.

Contact your eye doctor today to schedule your dilated and comprehensive eye exam or retinal photography. To learn more about eye health and find an eye care provider near you, visit **eyehealth.diabetes.org**.

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