

If you notice any sudden changes to your vision, see your eye health professional straight away.

The positive news is most vision loss from diabetic retinopathy can be prevented, provided it's diagnosed early and steps are taken to manage the condition.



Important reminders



The longer you have been diagnosed with diabetes, the greater the risk of developing a diabetes-related eye condition.



Have your eyes checked regularly, even if your vision seems fine.



Watch for changes in your vision such as blurry vision, spots or floaters.



Keep blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol in check.



Adopt a healthy lifestyle by eating well, being active, and avoid smoking.

Need more information?

Living with diabetes is not easy but with support and the right advice, you can protect your eyes and your vision.

Contact our National Helpline on **1800 111 709** for free information on reducing the risks of diabetes-related eye conditions.

Living with a diabetes-related eye condition?

Join Eye Connect today

Macular Disease Foundation Australia's **Eye Connect** support service is free of charge, independent and endorsed by Australia's leading eye health professionals.

It offers tailored support and information to assist people living with diabetes-related eye conditions. Connect with us to receive a free newsletter and keep up to date with our latest news and research.

To find out if Eye Connect is right for you visit www.mdfoundation.com.au/join-eyeconnect or call us on 1800 111 709.

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Diabetes-Related Eye Conditions



How does diabetes affect your eyes?

Diabetes is a complex, chronic condition characterised by high blood glucose (sugar) levels. In the long term, diabetes can affect many parts of the body including your eyes, largely as a result of changes to blood vessels.

Diabetic retinopathy is the most common type of eye condition experienced by people with diabetes. Others include cataract, glaucoma and transient blurring of vision. Everyone with diabetes is at risk of developing diabetes-related eye conditions.

It is important to have your eyes checked when you are first diagnosed with diabetes, followed by regular eye exams every one to two years, or as advised by your eye health professional.

What is diabetic retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy is a complication of diabetes caused by damage to the small blood vessels in the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. Over time, high blood glucose levels can weaken and damage these vessels, leading to vision problems and, if untreated, even vision loss.

Most people with diabetes will develop some form of diabetic retinopathy during their lifetime, but how it affects your vision is closely linked to managing your risk factors and your diabetes.

This includes:

- keeping blood glucose levels within your target range
- keeping blood pressure within your target range
- keeping blood lipid (cholesterol) levels within your target range
- choosing healthy foods and being physically active
- avoiding smoking

Later stages of diabetic retinopathy may require treatment by laser, eye injections, and/or eye surgery to prevent vision loss.

Diabetic macular oedema

Diabetic macular oedema is a complication of diabetic retinopathy that can occur at any stage. It occurs when leaking fluid from blood vessels in the retina accumulates under the macula, the area of the retina that is responsible for detailed vision. This can cause the loss of central vision and even legal blindness. You can monitor changes to central vision at home using an Amsler grid.

Diabetic macular oedema can often be effectively treated with eye injections.



Regular eye exams

Along with managing your diabetes, regular eye exams with your eye health professional are vital to reduce the risk of vision loss. The early stages of diabetic retinopathy typically have no symptoms so eye exams can help identify diabetes-related eye conditions at their earliest stage before vision loss has occurred.

If you're not sure where to start, talk to your GP or visit your local optometrist.

Diabetes and vision

Once symptoms do occur, vision loss can be rapid and, in some cases, may be long-lasting. The following symptoms could be due to diabetic retinopathy or diabetic macular oedema:

- dark spots or gaps in your vision
- blurred, distorted, dim or double vision
- frequent changes in glasses prescription
- bright haloes around lights
- flashes of light seen repeatedly, often in the peripheral vision
- sudden onset of haze, shadows or floaters.