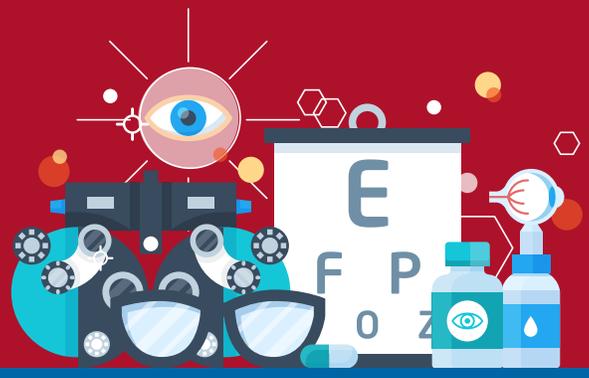


frequently asked questions about

# Diabetic Eye Exams & Retinopathy



## Why are regular eye exams so important for patients with diabetes?

Diabetes mellitus affects many parts of the body but can be particularly devastating to the eyes if the disease is not controlled.

Patients with untreated diabetes are

**25** more at **RISK** for **BLINDNESS** than the general population

The longer a person has diabetes, the higher the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy.

**80%** of patients who have diabetes for at least 15 years have some blood vessel damage to the retina.

Patients with Type 1 diabetes are more likely to develop diabetic retinopathy at a younger age. However, with improved methods of diagnosis and treatment, only a small percentage of patients who develop retinopathy have serious vision problems.

## What is diabetic retinopathy?

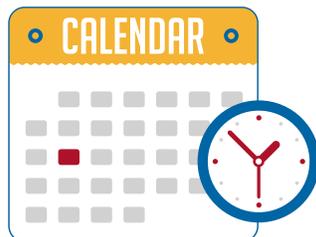
Diabetic retinopathy is among the most common eye complications of diabetes. It is the leading cause of new blindness among adults in the United States, and is caused by changes in the blood vessels of the eye.

Regular eye exams are essential to controlling your diabetes and preventing diabetic retinopathy. You must also monitor your blood pressure and sugar levels and avoid smoking.

## Wouldn't I know if I have diabetic retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy may be present without any symptoms, so early detection is the best protection against loss of vision.

Diabetic patients should schedule **dilated examinations** by an ophthalmologist or optometrist at least **once a year.**



## How does an eye doctor detect retinopathy?

Your pupils will be dilated during an eye exam. If blood vessel damage is indicated, the doctor will probably take a picture of the blood vessels and track changes over time. If damage is found, your eye doctor may recommend more frequent exams.

## How is this different from a "normal" eye exam?

In addition to a comprehensive eye exam to any medical conditions, your eye doctor is also screening for diabetic retinopathy. In some instances, your eye doctor may be able to provide you with an updated eyeglass prescription for an additional charge.

## What will this cost me?

- Medicare **covers 80%** of an eye exam once your annual deductible (\$183 in 2018) is met. You or your supplemental insurer are responsible for the amount due after Medicare's payment.
- Blue Cross Blue Shield, UnitedHealthcare, Humana Medicare Advantage and BCBS Medicare Advantage cover diabetic eye exams under their medical benefits, with normal co-pays and deductibles.

*\* Contact your insurance carrier, using the phone number on the back of your insurance card, for the most up-to-date insurance coverage. If your eye doctor determines that additional testing and/or treatment is necessary, these services could result in additional charges.*

## APPOINTMENT CARD

Eye Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_