

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.

Individuals with diabetes are:
25X *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.

► How is a diabetic eye exam different from a “normal” eye exam?

Diabetic eye exams are similar to regular exams. However, during a diabetic eye exam, your doctor will specifically focus on the health of your retina and the integrity of the blood vessels in your eye. In some instances, your eye doctor may be able to provide you with an updated eyeglass prescription for an additional charge.

► What is diabetic retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy is among the most common eye complication of diabetes. This is when high blood sugar levels cause damage to blood vessels in the retina. These damaged blood vessels can swell and leak, or they can become blocked. Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of new blindness among adults in the United States. Regular dilated eye exams and controlling your diabetes are essential to preventing diabetic retinopathy. You must also monitor your blood pressure 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.

Patients with diabetes 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.

► What will this cost me?

- Medicare Part B covers eye exams for diabetic retinopathy once each year if you have diabetes. The exam must be done by an eye doctor who's legally allowed to do the test in your state.
- Medicaid coverage varies by state. Please contact your Medicaid plan to confirm your individual coverage.
- 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.