

Your eye health and diabetes

Diabetes is the leading cause of preventable blindness in Aotearoa. Everyone living with diabetes is at risk of losing their vision.

Looking after your eyes is very important when you have diabetes. People with diabetes are more likely to develop eye problems.

The good news is, with early diagnosis and treatment, you can reduce or even prevent your chance of diabetes eye damage. You can also stop it from getting worse if you already have it.

The most important thing you can do to look after your eyes is have regular diabetes eye checks.



	Type 1	Type 2
Newly diagnosed?	<p>Eye checks tend to start 5 years after diagnosis. Get your doctor or diabetes health professional to refer you for a full diabetes eye check.</p> <p>It is very important that your doctor refers you to your local Diabetes Retinal Screening Programme.</p>	<p>Get your doctor or diabetes health professional to refer you for a full diabetes eye check when you are first diagnosed.</p> <p>It is very important that your doctor refers you to your local Diabetes Retinal Screening Programme as soon as you are diagnosed.</p>
Living with diabetes?	<p>After your first diabetes eye check, visit your doctor to get re-referred for follow-up checks at least every two years.</p>	<p>After your first diabetes eye check, visit your doctor to get re-referred for follow-up checks at least every two years.</p>
Already have diabetes eye damage?	<p>Have checks and treatment as directed by an eye health professional.</p>	<p>Have checks and treatment as directed by an eye health professional.</p>

How do I delay or prevent eye damage if I have diabetes?



Have regular diabetes eye checks at least every two years



Maintain healthy blood glucose levels



Maintain a healthy blood pressure



Quit smoking



Maintain healthy cholesterol



Report any rapid changes in your sight to your doctor immediately

In between my regular eye checks, what changes to my vision should make me see my doctor?

- ! My vision becomes **blurry**
- ! I have **trouble reading**
- ! I start to **see double**
- ! One or both of my **eyes hurt**
- ! I feel **pressure** in my eye(s)
- ! I see **spots** or '**floaters**' and/or **flashes**
- ! I **can't see things out the side of my eyes**, as I used to

Top Tips

-  Having diabetes can damage your sight
-  There is a lot you can do to lower your risk of diabetes eye damage or halt existing damage
-  Early detection and treatment of eye problems provides the best results
-  Have a full diabetes eye check every two years or as recommended by your optometrist or doctor. If you experience any changes to your vision or eyes, see a doctor straight away.



How can diabetes affect my eyes?

Diabetes can cause both short-term and long-term eye problems.

Short-term

High blood glucose levels can cause your vision to blur temporarily due to a change in the shape of the lens of your eye. You can experience blurred vision at different times of your diabetes journey including before you're diagnosed, when starting a new treatment, or when your blood glucose levels change quickly between high and low. Talk to your doctor if you notice this happening.

Long-term

Diabetes can lead to long-term eye problems including diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and cataracts. Factors that increase your risk of these more serious eye problems include consistently high blood glucose levels, high blood pressure or high cholesterol. These eye problems can lead to reduced vision or blindness if left untreated.

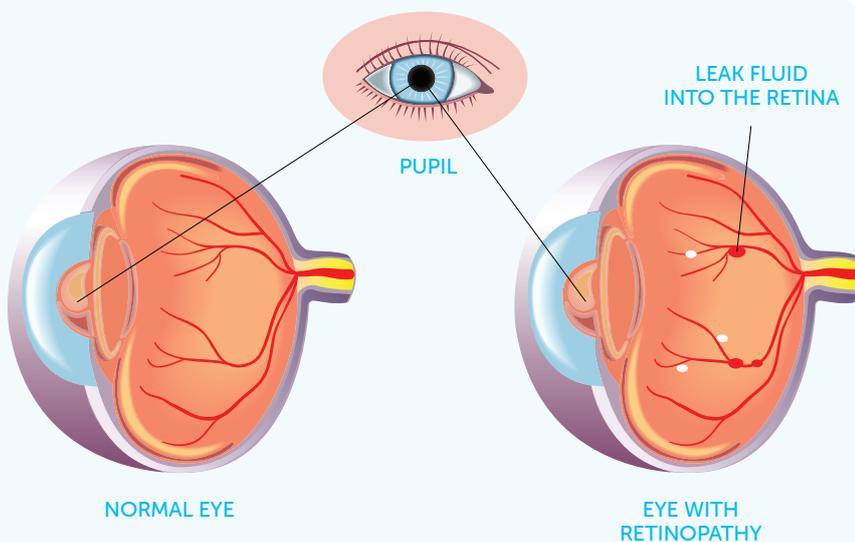
Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is a common complication of diabetes that damages tiny blood vessels in the back of the eye (retina). This causes the blood vessels to weaken and leak fluid or blood. 1 in 3 people with diabetes will develop diabetic retinopathy in their lifetime.

There may be no symptoms in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy, making it important to have regular eye checks so it can be detected and treated early. As retinopathy gets worse, symptoms can include blurred or distorted vision, seeing floating spots or flashes, sensitivity to light and poor night vision. Fortunately, if found early, diabetic retinopathy can be treated.

To find out more about long-term eye problems go to www.diabetes.org.nz/complication-eyes

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