



# DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

## DIABETES IS A GROWING EPIDEMIC

It includes serious risks for your eyes including glaucoma, cataracts and the most common diabetic eye disease, retinopathy. Untreated diabetes can lead to complete vision loss, often without any warning. The American Optometric Association predicts that by 2050 the number of Americans over 40 with diabetic retinopathy will triple to 16 million.

## HOW DIABETES AFFECTS THE EYES

Diabetes is a metabolic disorder in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone that allows the body to use blood sugar for energy. It's characterized by high levels of blood sugar, which cause changes in the blood vessels of the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye necessary for good vision.

In the early stages of diabetic retinopathy, small blood vessels in the eye swell. As the disease progresses, some vessels that nourish the retina become blocked. Abnormal new blood vessels begin to grow on the surface of the retina to replace blocked vessels. These new vessels have thin, fragile walls. If they leak blood, the result can be severe vision loss and even blindness.

## EYE EXAMS ARE ESSENTIAL

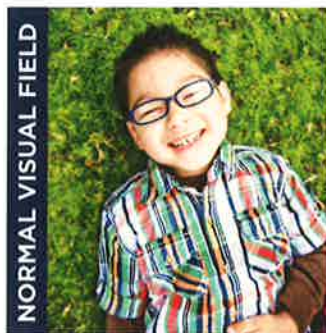
The only way that diabetic retinopathy can be diagnosed is through a comprehensive eye exam. People with both types of diabetes (type 1 and 2) are at risk of developing diabetic retinopathy. The longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to develop it.

## PROTECT YOURSELF

Early diagnosis and aggressive treatment are essential. The risk of blindness can be reduced by 90% with timely treatment and follow-up care.

## TAKE CONTROL

If you have diabetes, you can reduce eye problems by controlling your blood sugar and blood pressure levels and by obtaining regular comprehensive eye exams. When you are proactive about your health, you can protect yourself from easily preventable diseases and save money by catching long-term and chronic conditions early. Ensure you are making the best investment in your health by having regular, comprehensive eye and physical examinations.



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Sources: American Optometric Association, American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Diabetes Association, U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Prevent Blindness America, National Eye Institute