

# Diabetic Eye Disease

## Look to your future: Stay ahead of Diabetic Eye Disease

Did you know diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in people 20 to 74 years of age in the United States?<sup>1</sup> Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is the most common eye disease caused by diabetes and can result in Diabetic Macular Edema (DME). Both are serious conditions that can cause vision problems.<sup>2</sup>

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**As many as 7.7 million Americans have DR. Of those who have DR, about 750,000 also have DME.<sup>3</sup>**



### What is DR?<sup>2,3</sup>

DR is a retinal disease that may affect people with diabetes as they age. DR occurs when too much blood sugar from diabetes damages the blood vessels of the retina. These blood vessels can bulge, weaken, and leak blood into the retina. Nearly 1 in 2 Americans with diabetes has DR, but only about half of them are aware of it as there may be no symptoms.

### What is DME?<sup>2,3</sup>

DME occurs when damaged blood vessels from DR leak fluid into the retina and cause swelling of the macula, which affects vision. DME is the most common cause of vision loss among people with DR.

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**Early detection and treatment of DR can reduce risk of blindness by 95%. Make sure to speak with your doctor and maintain annual eye appointments if you have diabetes.<sup>2</sup>**

## Risk Factors

Your risk of getting DR and DME is higher if:

- You are African American.
- You smoke.
- You have had a diabetes diagnosis for multiple years.
- Your blood sugar levels are not under control.
- Your blood A1c levels are not within target range.
- Your blood cholesterol is not controlled.
- Your blood pressure is not controlled.

Be sure to speak with your doctor if any of these risk factors apply to you.

## Symptoms

DR and DME can affect your ability to read, write, drive, watch TV, and recognize faces of your loved ones. Look out for the following symptoms.

- Blurriness in the center of vision.
- Blind spots or patches.
- Straight lines that look wavy.
- Colors that look dull or washed out.

DR may have no symptoms in its early stages. When symptoms do occur, they may affect one or both eyes.<sup>2,4</sup>



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## How is Diabetic Eye Disease Diagnosed?<sup>2</sup>

Your eye doctor will review your medical and family history and do a complete eye exam to find out if you have diabetic eye disease. The eye exam may include the following tests:



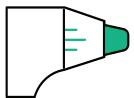
### Visual Acuity Test

This test measures how well you see the letters on an eye chart from a distance.



### Dilated Eye Exam

Your doctor puts drops into your eye to dilate (widen) the pupil. He or she can then see in the back of the eye, including the retina, for signs of problems or changes.



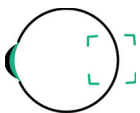
### Tonometry

This test measures the pressure inside your eye.



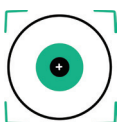
### Fluorescein Angiography

Dye is injected into a vein in your arm. The dye lets your eye doctor see the blood vessels in your eye to check for leaks or changes in the retina.



### Optical Coherence Tomography

This scan shows the layers of the retina and measures retinal thickness. It can help show your eye doctor if fluid is within or under the retina.



### Fundus Photography

This test lets your eye doctor look closely at your retina by taking pictures of the back of the eye.

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**If you have diabetes, get a dilated eye exam at least once a year to stay ahead of vision loss.**

**My next appointment is on:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Help reduce the risk of developing Diabetic Eye Disease<sup>2,4,5</sup>**

One of the best ways to reduce the risk of developing diabetic eye disease is to control diabetes through the following steps:

- Work toward keeping blood sugar and A1c levels within target range.
- Work toward controlling your blood cholesterol and blood pressure levels.
- Don't smoke.
- Take medication as directed by a healthcare provider.
- Eat nutritious food, eat quantities in moderation, and exercise regularly to maintain a healthy weight.

**Learn more about certain retinal diseases like DR and DME, as well as tips for living with low vision, at [LookToYourFuture.com](https://www.looktoyourfuture.com).**

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1. People With Diabetes Can Prevent Vision Loss, 2019. National Eye Institute and National Eye Health Education Program website. [https://www.nei.nih.gov/sites/default/files/nehep-pdfs/2018\\_NDM\\_Article\\_508.pdf](https://www.nei.nih.gov/sites/default/files/nehep-pdfs/2018_NDM_Article_508.pdf). Accessed October 5, 2020.
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  3. Facts about macular edema. National Institutes of Health, National Eye Institute website. <https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/eye-conditions-and-diseases/macular-edema>. Accessed August 5, 2020.
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  5. Smoking and eye disease. American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO EyeSmart) website. <https://www.aao.org/Assets/e410b8d7-b604-4414-83f0-e02928d0e6c1/635863878154100000/smoking-and-eye-disease-academy-patient-education-pdf?inline=1>. Accessed August 5, 2020.

