

Eye Exams for People with Diabetes

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE EYE PROBLEMS?

The best way to see if you have eye problems is to have an eye doctor check your eyes. You can have eye damage even if your vision is fine. It has nothing to do with needing glasses. Regular checkups with an eye doctor can detect eye disease early and prevent blindness.

There are different types of eye care providers:

- An **optician** makes glasses and lenses. An optician also makes and fits contact lenses.
- An **optometrist** is not a medical doctor, but can find and treat certain eye conditions and diseases. An optometrist also prescribes glasses and contact lenses.
- An **ophthalmologist** is a medical doctor who finds and treats all eye diseases. Ophthalmologists can also prescribe glasses and contact lenses. An ophthalmologist can treat severe eye problems.
- A **retinal specialist** is an ophthalmologist who only treats problems with the retina.

People with diabetes need to have a full eye exam every year by an ophthalmologist or optometrist who knows about eye problems in people with diabetes.

WHAT KIND OF EYE EXAM DO I NEED?

The eye doctor will put drops in your eyes to see the retina. This is called a dilated eye exam. The eye drops will make the pupils or black part of your eyes bigger. Then your doctor can see the back of your eye and find any eye problems early.

WHEN DO I NEED AN EYE EXAM?

Adults with Type 1 Diabetes

You need to have a dilated eye exam within five years of being diagnosed and every year after that.

Adults with Type 2 Diabetes

You need to have a dilated exam soon after you have found out you have diabetes. About 1 in 5 people with type 2 diabetes have some eye problems when they are diagnosed with diabetes. That's why it's important to have an eye exam soon after you find out you have diabetes.

After the first eye exam, all adults with diabetes should have a dilated eye exam every year, although your doctor may suggest every 2 or 3 years after a normal exam. Exams may be needed more often than once a year if you have eye problems.

Diabetes and Pregnancy

If you are planning to get pregnant, have a complete eye exam. Talk with your eye doctor about what can happen to your eyes during pregnancy.

Pregnant women with diabetes need an eye exam in the first 3 months. They also need to be checked again for one year after the baby is born.

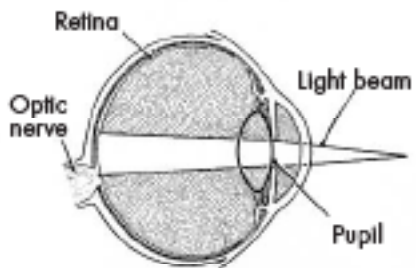
Before and After Your Pupil is Dilated



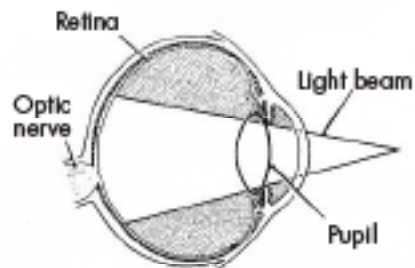
Your undilated pupil



Your dilated pupil



Portion of retina that can be seen through undilated pupil.



Portion of retina that can be seen through dilated pupil.

Courtesy of the National Eye Institute

This picture shows what the doctor sees when shining a light through the pupil at the front of the eye. You will notice that with a dilated pupil, the doctor can see more of the retina at the back of the eye.

More handouts about this and other topics can be found at <http://professional.diabetes.org/PatientEd>

For more information visit diabetes.org or call 1-800-DIABETES