

# Eye Care for People With Diabetes

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To keep your vision sharp, you'll want to take great care of your health so you can avoid problems related to diabetes.

Over time, high blood sugar can damage the tiny blood vessels in your eyes. That can lead to a condition called diabetic retinopathy. High blood sugar can also lead to cataracts and glaucoma, which happen earlier and more often when you have diabetes.

Use these seven tips to take charge of your disease and protect your eyes:

**Schedule appointments** with your eye doctor at least once a year so they can spot any problem early and treat it. During your exam, your eye doctor will use special drops to widen (dilate) your pupils and check the blood vessels in your eyes for early signs of damage.

**Keep your blood sugar under control.** If you do that, you can slow any damage to the tiny blood vessels in your eyes. Several times a year, you should have an A1c blood test. It shows your blood sugar levels over the past 2 or 3 months. Your result should be around 7% or less.

**Keep high blood pressure in check.** It can lead to eye disease, too. If you have high blood pressure and diabetes, you need to be even more careful about your health. Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure at every visit. For most people with diabetes, it should be less than 130/80.

**Check your cholesterol levels.** All it takes is a blood test to find out how much "bad" LDL and "good" HDL cholesterol you have. Too much LDL is linked to blood vessel damage.

**Eat for wellness.** Go for fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein. If that's a big change for you, you can get ideas and encouragement from a nutritionist. You can also ask your doctor's advice about when you should eat and how much is OK if you take insulin.

**If you smoke, quit.** Lighting up causes problems with your blood vessels, which makes you more likely to end up with eye trouble. It's not easy to kick the habit, so don't hesitate to ask your doctor for help. Or go to a support group or quit-smoking program.

**Move more.** Exercise can have a big influence on blood sugar. If you use insulin or medication to lower your blood sugar, ask your doctor when you should check your levels before and during your workouts. Also ask what type of workout you should do.

## **When Should I Call the Eye Doctor?**

Pick up the phone if you have any visual problems or notice any changes in your sight.

Get medical care ASAP if you have any of these symptoms:

- Blurry vision
- Black spots
- Flashes of light
- Any loss of sight in one or both eyes