

EYE PROBLEMS AND DIABETES

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Eye Problems And Diabetes

The three major eye problems that people with diabetes need to be aware of are cataracts, glaucoma, and retinopathy.

To prevent eye problems, you should:

- Control your blood glucose
- Have your eyes checked at least once a year by an ophthalmologist (eye specialist)
- Control high blood pressure and lipids

Contact your doctor if any of the following occur:

- Black spots in your vision
- Flashes of light
- “Holes” in your vision
- Blurred vision

Cataracts

A cataract is a clouding or fogging of the lens inside the eye. When this happens, light cannot enter the eye and vision is impaired.

Symptoms

- Blurred vision
- Glared vision

Treatment

Surgery followed by glasses, contact lenses, or lens implant.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a disease of the optic nerve (the “cable” that connects the eye to the brain and transmits light impulses to the brain). If the pressure inside the eye builds up, it can cause damage to this optic nerve. While most often there are NO symptoms from glaucoma, the following symptoms might occur:

- Loss of vision or visual field
- Headaches
- Eye aches (pain)
- Halos around lights
- Blurred vision
- Watering eyes

Treatment

- Special eye drops
- Laser therapy
- Medication
- Surgery

Prevention

Have your eye doctor screen for glaucoma annually.

Retinopathy

Problems with the retina are called diabetic retinopathy. Problems develop as a result of fluid leaking from blood vessels into the eye or abnormal blood vessels formed in the eye. In either case, vision can be affected. If retinopathy is not found early or is not treated, blindness can occur.

Symptoms

Sometimes there are no symptoms of retinopathy, but two common symptoms are:

- Blurred vision
- Spots or lines in your vision

Treatment

- Laser therapy
- Surgery
- Injections into eye (advanced retinopathy)

Prevention

Have your eye doctor screen for retinopathy annually.

Women with preexisting diabetes who become pregnant should have a comprehensive eye exam during the first trimester and close follow-up with an eye doctor during pregnancy. (This recommendation does not apply to women who develop gestational diabetes since they are not at risk for retinopathy).

Blurred vision

Don't buy a new pair of glasses when you notice you have blurred vision. Blurred vision can develop rapidly and can be due to high blood glucose levels. High blood glucose causes the lens of the eye to swell, which changes your ability to see. To correct this kind of blurred vision, you need to get your blood glucose level back into the target range (80-140 mg/dl before meals, and 100-160 mg/dl before bedtime snack). Blurred vision can also be a symptom of more serious eye problems. If your vision is blurred, contact your doctor.

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