

We believe that healthy vision is an essential part of a healthy and active lifestyle.



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This pamphlet is not intended as a substitute for a medical examination by a qualified physician. For more detailed information about diabetic retinopathy and the treatment possibilities, speak to your doctor.

Learn More About
**Diabetic
Retinopathy**



Diabetic Retinopathy

What is Diabetic Retinopathy?

The eye is comprised of several different parts working together to bring images into focus. The eye's retina allows the eye to sense light. If the varying levels of sugar associated with diabetes damage the blood vessels of the retina (called diabetic retinopathy), this can lead to damage in adjacent parts of the eye. Left untreated, diabetic retinopathy can lead to further vision loss or blindness.



Normal Vision



Vision with Diabetic Retinopathy

Symptoms

Many times, there are no early warning signs associated with the disease. Therefore, it is essential that people with diabetes receive yearly eye exams to increase the possibility of early detection. As the disease progresses, patients may develop blurred vision which lasts for days, vision loss, redness, poor night vision, pressure or pain in one or both eyes, or floaters (spots appearing in the field of vision).

Treatment Options

There are a variety of options available to treat diabetic retinopathy. Your ophthalmologist will discuss which one is best suited for your needs. These options may include laser photocoagulation and vitrectomy.

Laser Surgery

Laser surgery (laser photocoagulation), the current primary mode of treatment, is a procedure involving the use of a laser to either remove or repair the damaged blood vessels in the retina. The type of laser needed depends upon the stage of diabetic retinopathy being treated.

Vitrectomy

A vitrectomy removes the vitreous, the gel-like substance filling the eye, which may become filled with blood and scar tissue as a result of the damaged blood vessels in the retina. The vitreous is then replaced with another saline solution.

Often there are no symptoms in the early stages of Diabetic Retinopathy, nor is there any pain. *Don't wait for symptoms.* If you have diabetes, be sure to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.

All individuals diagnosed with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes are susceptible to developing a variety of medical complications. One of the possible eye complications of the disease is diabetic retinopathy.

Learn The Risks and Benefits of Treatment

Before considering undergoing any of the outlined treatment options for treating diabetic retinopathy, it is important to understand the risks and benefits associated with these options. Risks include, but are not limited to, loss of peripheral vision, decreased color vision, or decreased night vision. In rare cases, infection, bleeding, progression of a cataract, or retinal detachment may occur.

Benefits of receiving treatment may include stabilized vision and a 50% reduction in the risk of vision loss.

After surgery, it is important to follow your surgeon's advice carefully to ensure the best possible outcome for your situation.

What can I do if I already have some vision loss from Diabetic Retinopathy?

If you have lost some sight from Diabetic Retinopathy, ask your eye care professional about low vision services and devices that may help you make the most of your remaining vision.

Ask for a referral to a specialist in low vision. Many community organizations and agencies offer information about low vision counseling, training, and other special services for people with visual impairments.