

## Diabetic Eye Exam

An eye exam is important for those diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, Type 2 Diabetes, and Gestational Diabetes. More specifically, a dilated eye exam. This exam involves the physician putting eye drops in your eye to dilate the pupil, allowing the physician to see the retina and the back of your eye for early detection of possible problems. The retina is the part of the eye that converts what you are seeing into electrical signals to the brain, which then the brain receives and decodes. Studies have shown that 1 in 5 Type II patients are likely to have some sort of eye problem, when they are first diagnosed with diabetes.

### The American Diabetes Association recommends:

- Adults with Type 1 Diabetes should have a dilated eye exam within five years of first being diagnosed and every year after that
- Adults with Type II Diabetes should have a dilated eye exam as soon as they are diagnosed and every year after that. If problems have occurred, eye exams may be needed more than once in a year.

Eye Complications that are common in diabetes are:

### Glaucoma

- About 40% of people diagnosed with diabetes will develop glaucoma.
- Occurs when pressure builds up in the eye. This pressure pinches the blood vessels that carry blood to the retina and optic nerve. Over time the retina and nerve are damaged, causing gradual loss of vision.
- Risk of glaucoma is affected by the length of time a person had had diabetes and their age
- Lifting weights or heavy objects may cause additional detrimental pressure in the eye and should be discussed with your physician.

### Cataracts

- People with diabetes are 60% more likely to get cataracts than people not diagnosed with diabetes.
- Cataracts cause the clear lens of the eye to cloud, which in turn blocks light.
- Cataracts tend to occur at an earlier age and at a faster rate than for those without diabetes.
- It is recommended to wear sunglasses with UV protection and glare control if cataracts are present.

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## Retinopathy

- Between 40-45% of those living with diabetes develop retinopathy.
- There are two types:
  - o Nonproliferative retinopathy causes abnormal fluid shifts in the eye called edema. Fluid may leak into the macula, the part of the eye that allows you to focus. When fluid builds up, that is called macula edema, this causes vision to begin to blur with the potential to completely lose eye sight. Non proliferative edema does not need treatment unless macular edema is present. Treatment can be effective at stopping or reversing vision loss if not treated it can progress to proliferative retinopathy.
  - o Proliferative Retinopathy is a more serious form of retinopathy; it is the progression of retinopathy after several years of damage. This is when the blood vessels are so damaged, they close off and new vessels form creating scarring and possibly causing retinal detachment and blindness.

Factors that influence eye health while living with diabetes are:

- Blood sugar control
- Blood pressure control
- Length of time you have had diabetes
- Genetics

It is important for people diagnosed with diabetes to receive regular eye exams to prevent future problems and to be proactive if problems do occur.

Reference- "Eye Complications." *American Diabetes Association*, American Diabetes Association, 19 Nov. 2018, [www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/eye-complications/?loc=foot6\\_eye-exams\\_aug2015](http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/eye-complications/?loc=foot6_eye-exams_aug2015).