Diabetic retinopathy

Conditions and treatments

- Allergies
  - Allergic reaction to packaged food
- Anxiety
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Behavioural conditions
- Birth defects
- Blood and blood vessels
- Bones muscles and joints
  - Foot care - podiatrists
- Brain and nerves
- Cancer
- Complementary and alternative care
- Dementia

Healthy living

- Alcohol
- Babies and toddlers (0-3)
- Children (4-12)
- Drugs and addictive behaviours
Diabetic retinopathy

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All people with diabetes are at risk of developing diabetic retinopathy. Vision loss or blindness may be preventable through early detection and timely treatment. Good control of diabetes, blood pressure and cholesterol as well as regular eye examinations may prevent vision loss. It is important to take action before you notice any eye problems.

**Types of diabetic retinopathy**

There are three main types of diabetic retinopathy:

- **Non-proliferative retinopathy** is an early form of the disease, where the retinal blood vessels leak fluid or bleed.
- **Macular oedema** is a swelling of the macula, caused by the leakage of fluid from retinal blood vessels. It can damage central vision.
- **Proliferative retinopathy** is an advanced form of the disease and occurs when blood vessels in the retina disappear and are replaced by new fragile vessels that bleed easily, and that can result in a sudden loss of vision.

**Retinopathy is a high risk for diabetics**

It is important to understand your risk of diabetic retinopathy.

- Anyone with diabetes is at risk of developing retinopathy.
- People with diabetes (type 1 and type 2) are 25 times more likely to experience vision loss than people without diabetes.

Without treatment, diabetic retinopathy can cause loss of vision and blindness. Unfortunately, only half of the people with diabetes have regular eye exams, and one-third have never been checked.

**Symptoms**

There are no early-stage symptoms of diabetic retinopathy and vision loss may not occur until the disease is advanced.

Late-stage diabetic retinopathy symptoms include:

- Blurred vision
- Eye strain
- Headaches.

**Causes**

Diabetic retinopathy is an eye disease caused by complications of diabetes. Diabetes causes damage to the blood vessels that nourish the retina, the seeing part of the eye.

**Preventing diabetic retinopathy**

Strategies for preventing diabetic retinopathy include:

- **Effective diabetes management** – including better control of blood sugar levels, blood pressure and cholesterol. Good management will help delay the development of retinopathy.
- **Regular eye examinations** – early diagnosis and treatment can usually prevent severe vision loss. It is important to have your eyes tested when diabetes is first diagnosed.

**Treatment**

Treatment options include:

- **Manage your diabetes and diabetic retinopathy** – your doctor will assist you.
Laser treatment – for macular oedema and proliferative retinopathy. The laser treatment seals leaking blood vessels and can be used to reduce growth of new fragile vessels, helping prevent vision loss.

Surgery – may be required for severe cases of diabetic retinopathy that do not respond to laser treatment.

Fig. 1 A photograph of a normal retina

Fig. 2 Photograph of a retina showing proliferative retinopathy – (v) growth of new unnatural blood vessels, (b) retinal hemorrhage.

Where to get help

- Your family doctor
- Ophthalmologist (eye specialist)
- Optometrist.

Things to remember

- All people with diabetes are at risk of developing diabetic retinopathy.
- Vision loss or blindness may be preventable through early detection and timely treatment.
- Good control of diabetes, blood pressure and cholesterol as well as regular eye examinations may prevent vision loss.
- It is important to take action before you notice any eye problems.

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**Diabetes**

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- [Diabetes basics](#)
- [Types of diabetes](#)
- [Living with diabetes](#)
- [Complications with diabetes](#)

**Diabetes basics**

- [10 tips to help prevent type 2 diabetes](#)
  
  Lifestyle changes can prevent type 2 diabetes... [10 tips to help prevent type 2 diabetes](#)

- [Diabetes](#)
  
  Diabetes and the build-up of glucose (sugar) in the blood can cause serious complications if left untreated... [Diabetes](#)

- [Diabetes and insulin](#)
  
  It may take a while to find the right insulin dose to reduce your blood glucose to acceptable levels... [Diabetes and insulin](#)

- [Exercise and diabetes (video)](#)
  
  Healthy exercise is important for everyone. This video from Diabetes Australia – Victoria explores the importance of exercise when you have diabetes... [Exercise and diabetes (video)](#)

- [Health check](#)
  
  This health assessment questionnaire will identify which zones of your lifestyle are contributing to your personal health risk and provide actions you can take to make positive change... [Health check](#)

- [Managing my diabetes (video)](#)
  
  This video from Diabetes Australia – Victoria explores managing your diabetes... [Managing my diabetes (video)](#)
Types of diabetes

- **Diabetes - gestational**
  Gestational diabetes is diabetes that occurs during pregnancy and usually disappears when the pregnancy is over.

- **Diabetes - pre-diabetes**
  Pre-diabetes has no symptoms or warning signs, and is a risk factor for developing type 2 diabetes.

- **Diabetes type 1**
  Type 1 diabetes can affect anyone of any age, but is more common in people under 30 years.

- **Diabetes type 2**
  Type 2 diabetes may be prevented, but it cannot be cured.

Living with diabetes

- **Diabetes and exercise**
  Exercise is an important lifestyle choice for everyone. For people with diabetes or at risk of diabetes, exercise is still an important part of a healthy lifestyle.

- **Diabetes and healthy eating**
  Healthy eating for people with diabetes is no different than for everyone else.

- **Diabetes and healthy eating (video)**
  Healthy eating is important for everyone. This video from Diabetes Australia – Victoria explores healthy eating and food choices.

- **Diabetes and oral health**
  People with poorly controlled diabetes have a higher risk of tooth and gum problems.

- **Diabetes - foot care**
  Good foot care and regular check-ups can help people with diabetes avoid foot problems.

- **Diabetes - issues for children and teenagers**
  Many parents worry when their child with diabetes starts or returns to school.

- **Diabetes - long-term effects**
  The risk of most diabetes-related complications can be reduced.

- **Exercise and diabetes (video)**
  Healthy exercise is important for everyone. This video from Diabetes Australia – Victoria explores the importance of exercise when you have diabetes.

- **Getting active - tucker talk tips**
  The main thing is to choose physical activities that you enjoy and that you can stick to in the long term.

- **Managing my diabetes (video)**
  This video from Diabetes Australia – Victoria explores managing your diabetes.

Complications with diabetes

- **Blood pressure (high) - hypertension**
Hypertension, or high blood pressure, can increase your risk of heart attack, kidney failure and stroke.

- **Diabetes and erectile dysfunction**
  Men with diabetes are more prone to problems with erectile dysfunction or impotence.

- **Diabetes and kidney failure**
  Kidney failure means the kidneys can no longer remove waste and maintain the level of fluid and salts that the body needs.

- **Diabetic coma**
  Diabetic coma is a medical emergency and needs prompt medical treatment.

- **Diabetic neuropathy**
  Diabetes is the most common cause of neuropathy.

- **Diabetic retinopathy**
  Without treatment, diabetic retinopathy can cause loss of vision and blindness.

- **Heart disease - know your risk**
  Risk factors for heart disease include smoking, diabetes, obesity, family history and age.

- **Hyperglycaemia**
  Hyperglycaemia means too much glucose is circulating in the blood.

- **Hypoglycaemia**
  Hypoglycaemia refers to symptoms caused by low blood glucose. The most common reason for hypoglycaemia is diabetes medication.

- **Kidney failure**
  You can lose up to 90 per cent of kidney function before you even feel sick.

Related Information

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Home

Related information on other websites

- Life! Taking Action on Diabetes
- University of Melbourne - Department of Ophthalmology
- Vision Initiative

Support Groups

- Diabetes Australia ? Victoria

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