

## November is Diabetes Awareness Month

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## Sixty Percent of Americans with Diabetes Skip Annual Sight-Saving Exams

People with diabetes are at increased risk of developing serious eye diseases, yet most do not have sight-saving, annual eye exams, according to a study. The Eye Centers of Northwest Ohio joins the American Academy of Ophthalmology in reiterating the importance of eye exams during the month of November, which is observed as Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month.

Researchers at Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia have found that more than half of patients with the disease skip these exams. They also discovered that patients who smoke – and those with less severe diabetes and no eye problems – were most likely to neglect having these checks.

The researchers collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to review the charts of close to 2,000 patients age 40 or older with type 1 and type 2 diabetes to see how many had regular eye exams. Their findings over a four-year period revealed that:

- Fifty-eight percent of patients did not have regular follow-up eye exams.
- Smokers were 20 percent less likely to have exams.
- Those with less-severe disease and no eye problems were least likely to follow recommendations.
- Those who had diabetic retinopathy were 30 percent more likely to have follow-up exams.

One in 10 Americans has diabetes, putting them at heightened risk for visual impairment due to the eye disease diabetic retinopathy. The disease also can lead to other blinding ocular complications if not treated in time. Fortunately, having a dilated eye exam yearly or more often can prevent 95 percent of diabetes-related vision loss.

## What Is Diabetic Eye Disease?

Diabetic eye disease is a term for several eye problems that can all result from diabetes. Diabetic eye disease includes:

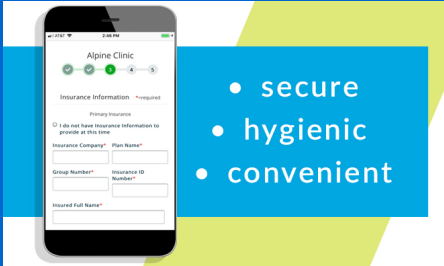
- Diabetic Retinopathy,
- Diabetic Macular Edema,
- Cataract, and
- Glaucoma.

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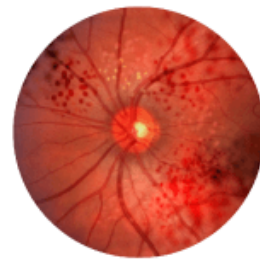
## Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is when blood vessels in the retina swell, leak or close off completely. Abnormal new blood vessels can also grow on the surface of the retina.

People who have diabetes or poor blood sugar control are at risk for diabetic retinopathy. Risk also increases the longer someone has diabetes. One woman developed diabetic retinopathy after living with diabetes for 25 years.



Normal  
Retina



Diabetic  
Retina

## Diabetic Macular Edema

Macular edema happens when fluid builds up on the retina and causes swelling and blurry vision. Diabetes can cause macular edema. Diabetic macular edema can lead to permanent vision loss.

## Diabetes And Cataracts

Excess blood sugar from diabetes can cause cataracts. You may need cataract surgery to remove lenses that are clouded by the effects of diabetes. Maintaining good control of your blood sugar helps prevent permanent clouding of the lens and surgery.

## Diabetes And Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that cause damage to your eye's optic nerve. This damage leads to irreversible loss of vision. Having diabetes doubles your chance of getting glaucoma.

## What Other Eye Problems Are Related To Diabetes?

Diabetes can cause vision problems even if you do not have a form of diabetic eye disease.

If your blood sugar levels change quickly, it can affect the shape of your eye's lens, causing blurry vision. Your vision goes back to normal after your blood sugar stabilizes. Have your blood sugar controlled before getting your eyeglasses prescription checked. This ensures you receive the correct prescription.