

# Diabetes and the eyes

## A guide to caring for yourself

Diabetes is the leading cause of vision loss in people 18–64 years old. And there are no obvious signs or symptoms. But the great news is an annual routine eye exam could prevent 95% of vision loss caused by diabetes.<sup>1</sup>



### How can diabetes affect your eyes?

Diabetes can have a severe impact on your eyes. This is because high blood sugar levels can damage blood vessels and nerves in the eyes. Eye diseases that affect people with diabetes can lead to vision loss. Early diagnosis and treatment can help protect your eyesight.

### Common eye diseases and conditions among people with diabetes

- **Diabetic Retinopathy** is a common complication of diabetes. It's a painless eye disease that causes damage to the blood vessels of the retina.
- **Macular Edema** is when the tiny blood vessels in the retina leak fluid which builds up and causes swelling. This distorts vision and may lead to permanent vision loss.
- **Glaucoma** is a disease that people with diabetes are more likely to develop. It's a condition that damages the eye's optic nerve and can result in vision loss.
- **Cataracts** are when the lens of the eye looks cloudy. People with diabetes are 2-5 times more likely to develop cataracts.<sup>2</sup>
- **Dry eye** is a common condition for people who have diabetes – 54% of people with diabetes have dry eye.<sup>1</sup> Typically causing blurred vision, excessive watering, and severe stinging and burning of the eyes.

### Steps to protect vision

The best way to prevent eye problems related to diabetes is to:

- **Manage blood sugar levels**
- **Lower blood pressure and cholesterol**
- **Don't smoke**
- **Avoid harmful rays**

### Visit the eye doctor if you experience:

- **Blurred vision**
- **Dark spots or "holes" in your vision**
- **Flashes of light**
- **Seeing floaters**
- **Poor night vision**

<sup>1</sup> American Diabetes Association

<sup>2</sup> National Eye Institute