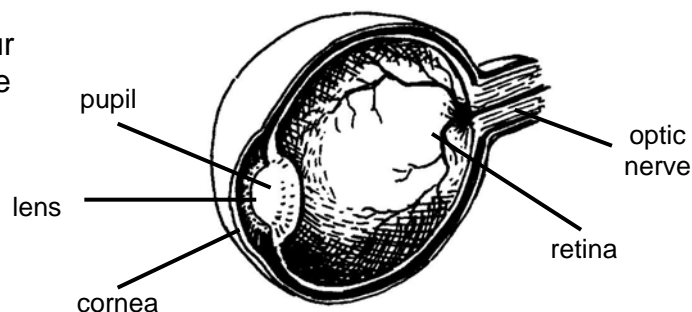


# Eye care

People with diabetes are at risk of eye problems. Many are preventable through regular screening and early treatment. Keeping blood glucose levels close to target is an important part of preventing eye problems.

## Eyes and blood glucose levels

High blood glucose can effect your ability to focus and can also cause blurred vision. Blurred vision is common when people are newly diagnosed with diabetes or when blood glucose is high. It usually settles down as blood glucose improves. You may wish to delay getting new glasses until your blood glucose settles.



## Diabetes and retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is the term used to describe damage to the blood vessels of the retina.

The damaged vessels become weak and can:

- > balloon out, like an inner tube of a tyre – this is called an aneurysm
- > puncture or blow-out causing bleeding
- > leak fluids and cause spots on the retina called exudates
- > narrow or block causing reduced or lack of blood supply to the retina.

When blood supply is reduced, the retina becomes starved. New blood vessels don't work well and can snap or burst. Blood can get into the eye and block light and vision.

## Other eye problems

A cloudy lens is called a cataract. People with diabetes can develop cataracts at a younger age. A cataract causes problems with vision.

Glaucoma is more common in people with diabetes. Glaucoma happens when pressure builds up in the eye.

Eye problems are treated by a specialist doctor called an ophthalmologist.

## How do I know if I have an eye problem?

You may not notice any signs or symptoms or you may notice one or more of the signs below:

- > blurry or double vision
- > rings, flashing lights, dark or floating spots
- > pain or pressure in one or both of your eyes
- > trouble seeing things out of the corners of your eyes.

Any changes in your vision should be checked by your doctor or specialist.



## What can I do to protect my eyes?

### Eye check ups

Have your eyes checked soon after diagnosis and then every 2 years. Checking the eyes involves shining a bright light into the eye and viewing the back of the eye. If retinopathy is found you will need treatment by an ophthalmologist.

Women with diabetes who wish to become pregnant should have a check prior to getting pregnant or as early in their pregnancy as possible.

### Manage diabetes

Keep your blood glucose as close as possible to your target levels. Studies have shown that if diabetes and blood glucose are well managed, eye damage can be minimised.

### Check blood pressure

Keep your blood pressure as close to target as possible. High blood pressure pushes on the blood vessels and worsens the changes caused by diabetes.

### Don't smoke

Smoking causes damage to blood vessels and increases blood pressure.

## What about treatment?

### Laser treatment

Laser is a strong light beam that helps control bleeding from damaged blood vessels.

### Cataract surgery

The lens is replaced with a plastic one. This operation is often done as day surgery.

## Key points to remember

You can reduce your risk by following some simple steps:

- > maintain blood glucose and blood pressure as close to normal as possible
- > control blood pressure
- > don't smoke
- > have regular eye checks so that problems are detected early
- > get problems treated as soon as they are detected.

## Where can I go for more information?

Diabetes Outreach	<a href="http://www.diabetesoutreach.org.au/consumer">www.diabetesoutreach.org.au/consumer</a>
Royal Society for the Blind	<a href="http://www.rsb.org.au/index.html">www.rsb.org.au/index.html</a>
Optometrists Australia	<a href="http://www.optometrists.asn.au">www.optometrists.asn.au</a>
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists	<a href="http://www.ranzco.edu/aboutus/faq">www.ranzco.edu/aboutus/faq</a>

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## For more information

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