

Place
Postage
Stamp Here

If You Have Diabetes Protect Your Eyesight

Don't let this...



Turn into this!



**Get a dilated retinal
exam every year!**

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Optometric Association from Healthy Eyes, Healthy People.

October 2009

Diabetes and Your Eyes

If you have diabetes, you are at risk of developing diabetic eye disease. But early detection and treatment can help prevent further eye damage and future vision loss.

Diabetic eye disease refers to a group of eye problems that people with diabetes are at risk for developing. All can cause severe vision loss or even blindness:

- Diabetic retinopathy - damage to the blood vessels in the retina
- Cataracts - clouding of the eye's lens
- Glaucoma - an increase in fluid pressure inside the eye that leads to optic nerve damage

A Closer Look at Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is the most common eye condition associated with diabetes. It is caused when the tiny blood vessels on the retina – the light-sensitive tissue in the back of the eye – are damaged.

In its early stage, known as background retinopathy, the blood vessels may swell and leak fluid. Often, symptoms go unnoticed at this phase of the disease.

If not properly treated, the condition may progress into the more advanced form called proliferative retinopathy. At this stage, new blood cells grow on the surface of the retina and can bleed into the eye, blocking vision.

It may be tempting to postpone a visit to the eye doctor if you are not experiencing eye pain or blurred vision. But remember, symptoms don't always appear in the early stages.

Understanding Dilation

Having your regular doctor look at your eyes or having your eyeglass prescription tested is **not** enough.

Your eye doctor can detect diabetic retinopathy by performing a dilated retinal exam.



Medicated drops are placed in each eye, enlarging the pupils. This dilation allows your eye doctor to check the back of your eyes for any signs of retinopathy. Your eye doctor can then determine if any further treatment is necessary.

Most health insurance carriers cover an annual dilated retinal eye exam for people with diabetes under "medical" benefits. Check with your health insurance carrier.

Communication is Key

It is important to **notify your family doctor or healthcare provider about your dilated retinal eye exam results**, as this information can be used to help monitor your diabetes.

If your eye doctor does not already do so, the attached report form can be used to communicate your eye exam results to your family doctor. Simply detach the form at the dotted line and follow the directions at the top of the form.



KENTUCKY DIABETES NETWORK, INC.

www.kentuckydiabetes.net

A statewide partnership to improve the treatment and outcomes for Kentuckians with diabetes

Dilated Eye Exam Report Form

HOW TO USE THIS FORM:

1. Fill out "Your Information" section.
2. Ask your eye doctor to fill out the "Eye Care Office" section.
3. Detach the form at the dotted line, fold over and seal. Fill out the mailing label with your family doctor's address and your return address.
4. **Mail or carry this form to your family doctor** so it can be put in your medical chart.

Your Information

Name: _____ DOB: _____

Address: _____

Family doctor's name/address: _____

Eye exam appointment date/time: _____

Eye care professional's name/office address: _____

Eye Care Office

Date of exam: _____

Check all that apply:

Non-proliferative retinopathy ☐ No ☐ Yes

Proliferative retinopathy ☐ No ☐ Yes

Cataracts ☐ No ☐ Yes

Glaucoma ☐ No ☐ Yes

☐ Other _____

Visual Acuity: _____

Next recommended visit: _____

Eye care professional's signature: _____

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