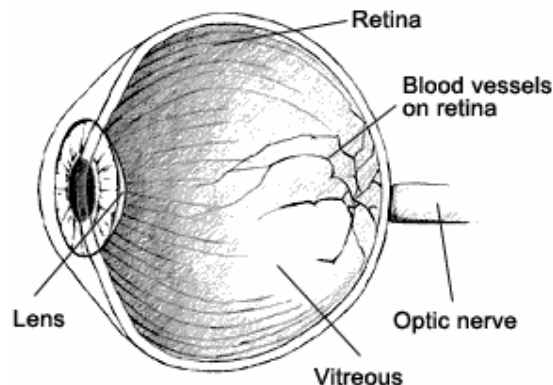




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Diabetes & Our Eyes

A diabetic can lead a normal life but, never forget, it is possible only when other vital organs of the body are also taken care of, which could be affected by diabetes. This high blood glucose, also called blood sugar, can damage many parts of the body, such as the heart, blood vessels, eyes, and kidneys. Heart and blood vessel disease can lead to heart attacks and strokes. The patients can do a lot to prevent or slow down diabetes problems. Today we are going to discuss the possible effects of diabetes on our eyes and also how to take care of them.



Day-to-day activities: There is a disciplined method to follow which can help the diabetics in many ways, e.g.:

- Follow the healthy eating plan in accordance with your needs and the advise of your doctor or dietician.
- At least 30 minutes a day's physical activity is a must like walking or consult your doctor for what activities are good for you.
- Take your medicines as directed.
- Check your blood glucose every day. Each time you check your blood glucose, write the number in your record book.
- Check your feet daily for cuts, blisters, sores, swelling, redness, or sore toenails. Avoid injury to your feet at any cost.
- Brush and floss your teeth every day.
- Control your blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Avoid smoking or sitting in smoker's company.

Eye care for Diabetic persons: Keep your blood glucose and blood pressure as close to normal as you can. Have an eye care professional examine your eyes at least once a year but better, twice a year. Have this exam even if your vision is OK. The eye care professional will use drops to make the black part of your eyes—pupils—bigger. This process is called dilation. This dilated pupil, allows the eye care professional to see the back of our eye. Finding eye problems early and getting treatment right away will help prevent more serious problems later on. Ask your eye care professional to check for signs of cataracts and glaucoma.

If you are pregnant and have diabetes, see an eye care professional during your first 3 months. If you are planning to get pregnant, ask your doctor if you should have an eye exam. And remember, pregnant women must not smoke.

High blood glucose and high blood pressure from diabetes can hurt four parts of our eye:

- **Retina :** The retina is the lining at the back of the eye. The retina's job is to sense light coming into the eye.
- **Vitreous :** The vitreous is a jelly-like fluid that fills the back of the eye.
- **Lens :** The lens is at the front of the eye. It focuses light on the retina.
- **Optic nerve:** The optic nerve is the eye's main nerve to the brain.

Retina damage happens slowly. Our retinas have tiny blood vessels that are easy to damage. Having high blood glucose and high blood pressure for a long time can damage these tiny blood vessels. First, these tiny blood vessels swell and weaken. Some blood vessels then become clogged and do not let enough blood through. At first, you might not have any loss of sight from these changes. Or both eyes may have the same amount of damage. Diabetic retinopathy is the medical term for the most common diabetes eye problem. As diabetes retina problems get worse, new blood vessels grow. These new blood vessels are weak. They break easily and leak blood into the vitreous of the eye. The leaking blood keeps light from reaching the retina. One may see floating spots or almost total darkness. Sometimes the blood will clear out by itself. But one might need surgery to remove it.

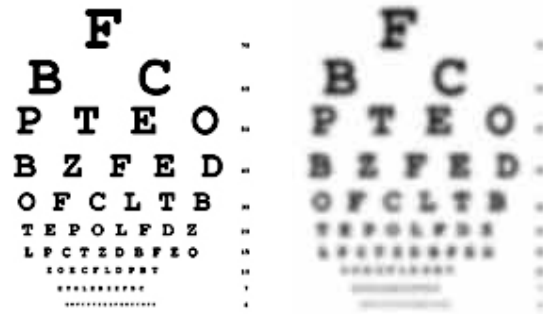
Over the years, the swollen and weak blood vessels can form scar tissue and pull the retina away from the back of the eye. If the retina becomes detached, you may see floating spots or flashing lights. You may feel as if a curtain has been pulled over part of what you are looking at. A detached retina can cause loss of sight or blindness if you don't take care of it right away. Call your eye care professional without delay if you are having any vision problems or if you have had a sudden change in your vision.

Remedial measures: First, keep your blood glucose and blood pressure as close to normal as you can. Your eye care professional may suggest laser treatment, which is when a light beam is aimed into the retina of the damaged eye. The beam closes off leaking blood vessels. It may stop blood and fluid from leaking into the vitreous. Laser treatment may slow the loss of sight. If a lot of blood has leaked into your vitreous and your sight is poor, your eye care professional might suggest you have surgery called a vitrectomy. A vitrectomy removes blood and fluids from the vitreous of your eye. Then clean fluid is put back into the eye.

Signs of retina damage: You may not get any signs of diabetes retina damage or you may get one or more of the following signs:

- blurry or double vision
- rings, flashing lights, or blank spots
- dark or floating spots

- pain or pressure in one or both of your eyes
- trouble seeing things out of the corners of your eyes



Normal

Blurry

If you have retina damage from diabetes, you may have blurry or double vision.

Other eye problems: You can get two other eye problems—cataracts and glaucoma. People without diabetes can get these eye problems too. But people with diabetes get them more often and at a younger age. A cataract is a cloud over the lens of the eye, which is usually clear. The lens focuses light onto the retina. A cataract makes everything you look at seem cloudy. You need surgery to remove the cataract. During surgery your lens is taken out and a new lens, is put in. Cataract surgery helps you see clearly again.

Glaucoma starts from pressure building up in the eye. Over time, this pressure damages your eye's main nerve—the optic nerve. The damage first causes you to lose sight from the sides of your eyes. Treating glaucoma is usually simple. Your eye care professional will give you special drops to use every day to lower the pressure in your eye. Or your eye care professional may want you to have laser surgery.

(Source & ref.: NDIC/Medical India dot Org/Diabetics Association of India)

For all chronic or other diseases like migraine, headaches, arthritis and other joint pains, diabetes, BP, leucorrhea, anemia, male and female sexual problems and others, contact Dr. A. Kumar through Asian World.

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