



DIABETIC EYE DISEASE

What is Diabetic Eye Disease?

Diabetic eye disease refers to a group of eye problems that people with diabetes can get. All of these problems can lead to vision loss and even blindness.

Diabetic Retinopathy

This is the most serious form of diabetic eye disease. It is caused by changes in the blood vessels in the retina (the back part of the eye). These changes can cause vision loss or blindness. Anyone with Diabetes can get this disease. However the longer someone has had diabetes, the more likely they are to get it.

Cataracts

Cataracts are the clouding of the eye's lens (the part of the eye that allows light in) causing vision to become blurry. People with Diabetes are twice as likely to get cataracts as those who do not have the disease.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma occurs when there is an increase in the fluid pressure inside the eye. This leads to nerve damage and a loss of vision. People with diabetes are almost twice as likely to get glaucoma as those who do not have the disease.

What are the symptoms of Diabetic Eye Disease?

Diabetic Retinopathy

With diabetic retinopathy there are no early symptoms. Most people do not know they have the disease until it is too late and the eyesight is lost and cannot be brought back. That is why regular eye exams are so important for people with diabetes.

Cataracts

With cataracts you may have the following symptoms:

- Cloudy or blurry vision
- Difficulty seeing things that are far away
- A change in the way you see colors, especially yellow
- Difficulty driving at night
- Problems with glaring lights
- Double vision

Glaucoma

With some types of Glaucoma there are no early symptoms. With other types, a person will have severe eye pain or a headache with nausea and vomiting. Having these symptoms is considered a medical emergency.

How is Diabetic Eye Disease treated?

Diabetic Retinopathy

To treat diabetic retinopathy, your doctor may recommend laser treatments. Laser treatments aim a beam of light onto the retina (back part of the eye) to shrink the abnormal blood vessels.

Cataracts

For some people, having cataracts just means you may need a stronger lens in your eyeglasses or contact lenses. However, other people with cataracts may need surgery. During the surgery, the "cloudy" lens will be removed and a new, artificial lens inserted into the eye.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma can be treated with eye drops, pills, and laser surgery or eye operations. All of these methods help by making the eye produce less fluid or by making it easier for the eye to drain fluid, which reduces pressure in the eye.

Can Diabetic Eye Disease be prevented?

Diabetic eye disease cannot be completely prevented. But there are things you can do to decrease your chances of getting it and prevent severe vision loss. To protect your vision you should:

- Get regular eye exams. Even if you are seeing fine, you need a regular eye exam once a year.
- Keep your blood sugar under control. Work with your doctor to keep your blood sugars as close to normal as possible.
- Keep your blood pressure under control. High blood pressure can damage your eyes. You should have your doctor check your blood pressure at least four times a year. If it is higher than 130/80 you may want to get a blood pressure cuff and check it regularly at home.
- Talk to your doctor about what kinds of physical activity are best for you to do.