

Understanding Your Condition—A Guide for Patients

Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness (20/200 or worse) in Americans of working age (20-74). Only 50% of patients with diabetes receive appropriate eye care. Diabetic retinopathy is a complication of diabetes that affects the eyes. It is caused by poorly controlled blood sugar, which damages the blood vessels in the retina. This is a painless eye disease that can slowly or quickly take away your vision. Vision that is lost often cannot be fully restored. About 95% of blindness can be prevented through early detection, timely treatment, and appropriate follow up.

Risk factors:

- How long you have had diabetes
- Blood sugar control
- Blood pressure control
- Lipid control
- Renal and heart disease
- Lifestyle: obesity, smoking, moderate to severe alcohol consumption, physical inactivity

What can and should you do?

Get a dilated eye exam yearly or as recommended by your eye doctor

- Control your ABCs, (A1c, blood pressure, cholesterol)
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle, including diet and physical activity
- Limit processed foods and soft drinks
- Kick the smoking habit
- Get good sleep! Studies recommend six to nine uninterrupted hours a night
- Take your medications as prescribed by your primary doctor

Please do not hesitate to contact your health care providers, including your eye doctor, with any questions. Be active in your care as the health of your body is directly tied to the health of your eyes!