

Diabetic eye disease is a group of eye conditions that affect people with diabetes such as:

\* **Diabetic retinopathy (DR)** - Affects blood vessels in the light-sensitive tissue (the retina) that lines the back of the eye. It is a complication of diabetes caused by damage to blood vessels in the eyes. "DR" is the most common cause of vision loss among people with diabetes, and the leading cause of vision impairment and blindness among working-age adults.

\* **Diabetic macular edema (DME)** - Caused by diabetic retinopathy, DME is the swelling in an area of the retina called the macula (the part of the retina responsible for sharp central vision). DME occurs when the damaged blood vessels leak fluid into the macula. This fluid can cause changes in your vision.

\* **Cataract** - The clouding of the eye's lens. Adults with diabetes are 2-5 times more likely than those without diabetes to develop cataract. Cataract also tends to develop at an earlier age in people with diabetes.

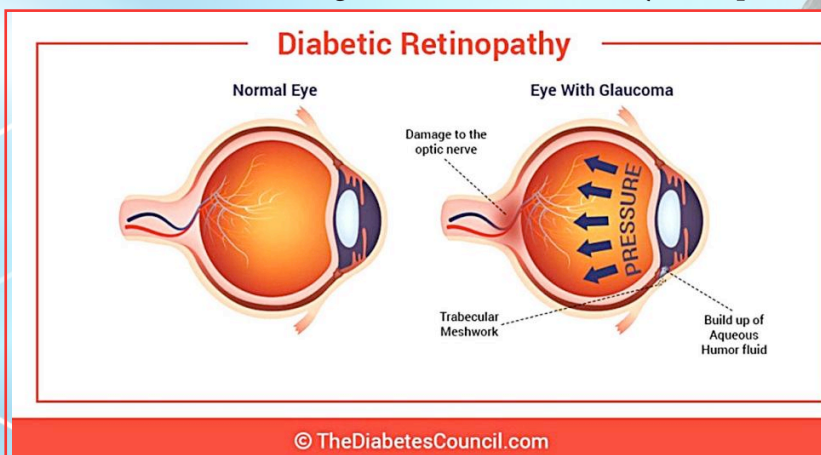
\* **Glaucoma** - A group of diseases that damage the eye's optic nerve (the bundle of nerve fibers that connect the eye to the brain). Some types of glaucoma are associated with elevated pressure inside the eye. In adults, diabetes nearly doubles the

risk of glaucoma.

While some people receive no warning signs of diabetic eye disease, others may develop issues like:

- ^ Blurry vision
- ^ Double vision
- ^ Dark spots (Often referred to as floaters)
- ^ Pain/Pressure in the eyes
- ^ Rings, flashing lights, or blank spots
- ^ Trouble with peripheral vision

All forms of diabetic eye disease have the potential to cause severe vision loss and blindness. If left untreated, the severity of the damage could become irrevocable.

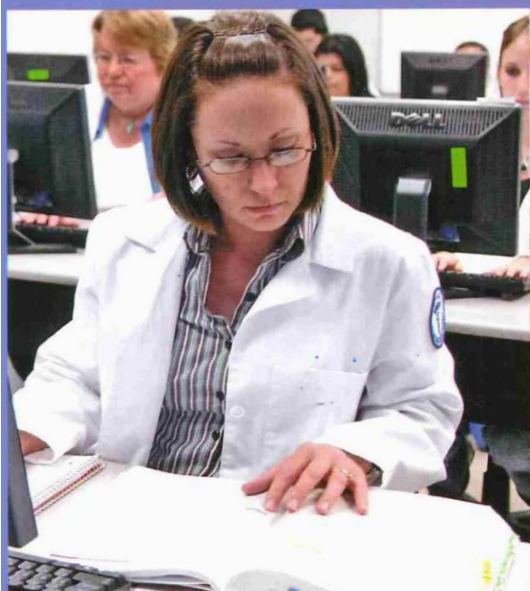


### HOW CAN I PROTECT MY VISION?

The National Eye Institute (NEI) has completed clinical research studies. It is believed that early detection and treatment is vital to reduce the risk of blindness by almost 95 percent.

Individuals who suffer from diabetes are encouraged to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year as a preventative method of controlling any type of eye degeneration. Other preventative measures to reduce the risk of vision loss are to control elevated blood pressure and cholesterol issues by utilizing a healthy diet, and moderate exercise.

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