

For more information on diabetic eye disease, contact:

- **EyeCare America**
1-877-887-6327
1-800-222-3937
www.eyecareamerica.org
- **National Eye Health Education Program**
31 Center Drive MSC 2510
Bethesda, MD 20892-2510
www.nei.nih.gov

On controlling blood sugar, contact:

- **National Diabetes Education Program**
One Diabetes Way
Bethesda, MD 20814-9692
www.ndep.nih.gov
- **National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse**
1 Information Way
Bethesda, MD 20892-3560
www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov

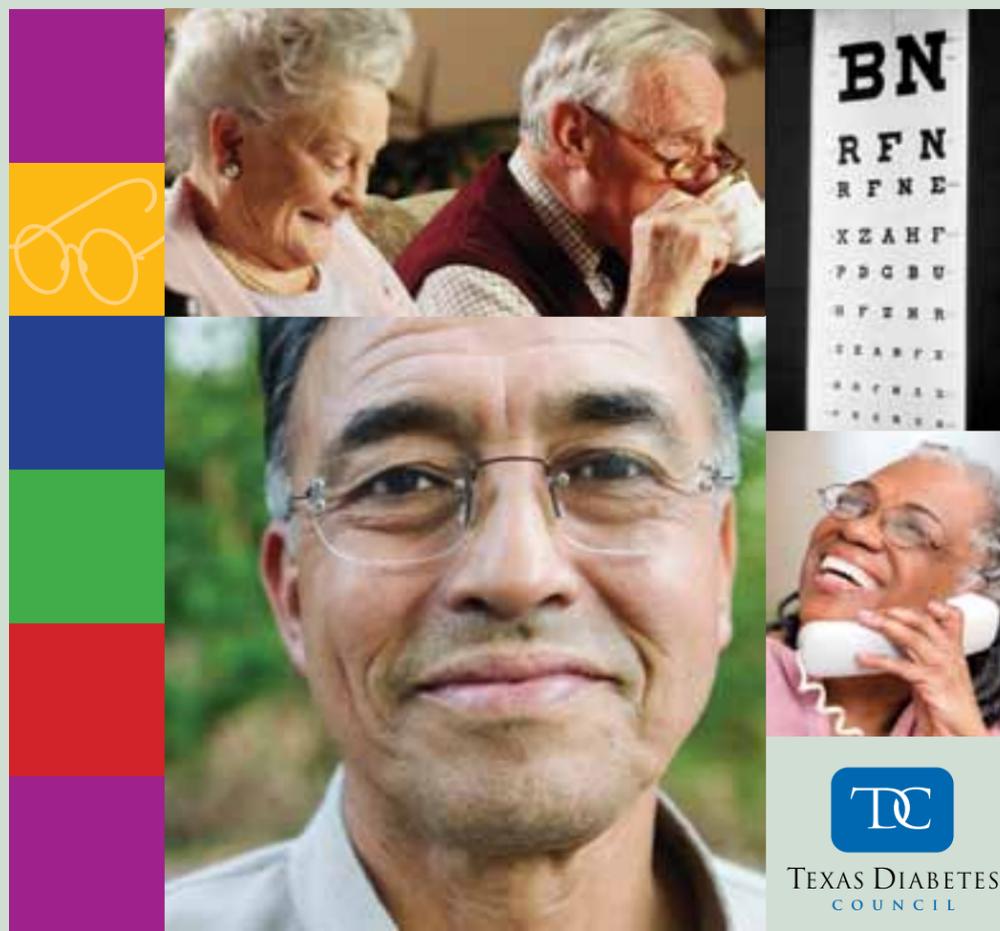
The National Eye Institute, Institutes of Health contributed information for this brochure.

Texas Diabetes Council MC 1965
Texas Department of State Health Services
PO Box 149347, Austin, TX 78714-9347
www.texasdiabetescouncil.org 1-888-963-7111 ext. 7490



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GETTING THE FACTS ABOUT DIABETIC EYE DISEASE



Facts About Diabetic Eye Disease

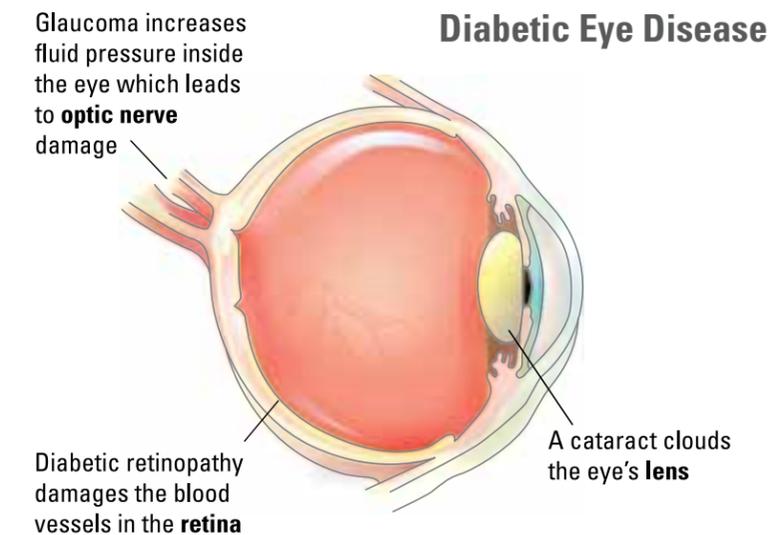
Diabetic eye disease refers to a group of eye problems that people with diabetes may face as a complication of this disease. All can cause severe vision loss or even blindness. With early detection, diabetic eye disease often can be treated before loss of vision occurs.

If you have diabetes, you should have a dilated eye examination at least once a year. During the exam, your eye care professional uses eye drops to enlarge your pupils. This allows him or her to see more of the inside of your eyes to check for signs of eye disease.

Diabetic Eye Disease

Diabetic eye disease includes diabetic retinopathy, cataracts and glaucoma.

Diabetic retinopathy is the most common diabetic eye disease. It is caused by changes in the blood vessels of the retina, often resulting in vision loss or blindness. Diabetic retinopathy is treated with laser surgery, and appropriate follow-up care can reduce the risk of blindness by 90 percent.



A **cataract** is a clouding of the natural lens, the part of the eye responsible for focusing light and producing clear, sharp images. Cataracts develop at an earlier age in people with diabetes and usually can be treated with surgery.

Glaucoma is a build-up of pressure in the eye, which can lead to damage of the optic nerve. A person with diabetes is nearly twice as likely to get glaucoma as other adults. The longer you have had diabetes, the greater your risk of getting glaucoma. Glaucoma is treated with medications, laser or other forms of surgery.





A Look at Diabetic Retinopathy

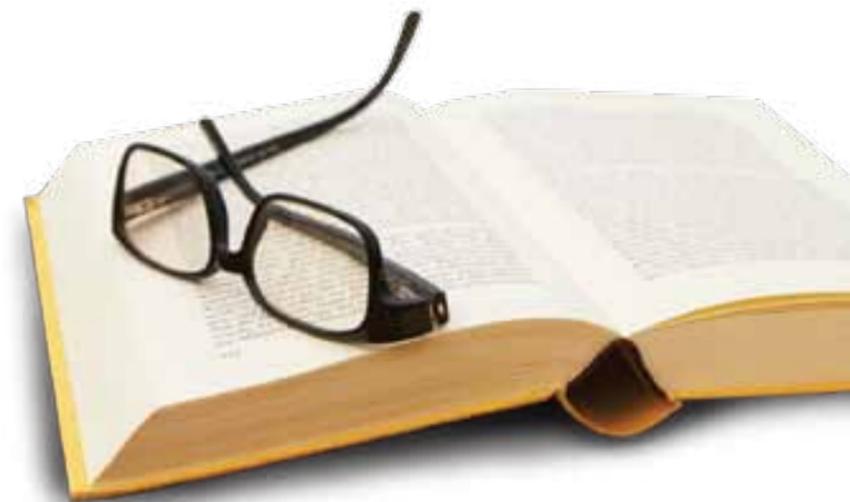
Anyone with diabetes is at risk for developing diabetic retinopathy, the leading cause of blindness in American adults. The longer a person has diabetes, the more likely he or she will get diabetic retinopathy. Here are some facts about this diabetic eye disease:

- Between 40 to 45 percent of individuals with diagnosed diabetes have some degree of diabetic retinopathy.
- Often there are no symptoms in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy. There is no pain, and there may not be any changes in vision. Over time, diabetic retinopathy can get worse and cause vision loss and blindness.
- Diabetic retinopathy usually affects both eyes.

- Every pregnant woman with diabetes should have a comprehensive, dilated eye exam early in her pregnancy. Your doctor also may recommend additional exams before your baby is born.
- Besides regular annual eye exams, your eye care professional may decide that you need to have your eyes examined more often than once a year, if you have diabetic retinopathy.
- Laser surgery often cannot restore vision that has already been lost. That is why finding diabetic retinopathy early is the best way to prevent vision loss.
- Diabetic retinopathy cannot totally be prevented, but your risk can be greatly reduced. Control of blood sugar level slows the onset and progression of retinopathy and lessens the need for laser surgery for severe retinopathy.

Preventing Vision Loss

Finding and treating diabetic eye disease early — before it causes vision loss or blindness — is the best way to control diabetic eye disease. Patients with diabetes should have a comprehensive, dilated eye examination at least once a year. Report changes in vision or eye problems to both your regular doctor and eye doctor.



People with diabetes also can take these steps to prevent complications:

1. Know your **ABCs** — **A1c** (blood glucose), **Blood pressure (BP)**, & **Cholesterol** numbers
2. Take medicines as prescribed by your doctor
3. Monitor blood sugar daily
4. Maintain a healthy weight
5. Get regular physical activity
6. Quit smoking

