

Diabetic Eye Care

If you have Diabetes, you probably know that your body cannot use or store sugar properly. When your blood sugar gets too high, it can damage the blood vessels in your eyes. **This damage leads to Diabetic eye disease called Diabetic Retinopathy and can only be detected in a dilated eye examination.** Between 40-45% of all Diabetics have some stage of Diabetic eye disease. The American Diabetic Association guidelines state a Diabetic should have a dilated examination annually (or more often if needed).

Here is information that will help you to achieve the best eye health possible:

*When you come for an eye examination, what should you be prepared to tell the doctor about your blood sugar status?

1. Length of time you have been a Diabetic?
2. When did you last see your Diabetic provider?
3. What is your most current **A1C level and when was it performed?**
4. What was your last BS stick?
5. What medications are you taking now for BS control? Has it changed?

*Why do I need to know my A1C level?

Your A1 C level is your **Diabetic report card** and tells you how well your Diabetes is controlled. An A1C test is a blood test ordered by your PCP.

*How do I know if my A1C level is too high?

An A1C level of 7 or above is a positive indication that you might be developing Diabetic damage in your eyes, kidneys, and feet.

*What type of damage occurs when my sugar is not controlled?

The most common is bleeding in the back of the eye (retina) which may produce permanent sight loss. This bleeding is called **Diabetic Retinopathy**.

*How can I prevent this from happening?

1. Have regular Diabetic eye examinations (at least once a year)
2. By knowing and monitoring your A1C level—keeping it 6-6.5.
3. Watch what and how much you eat.
4. Keep your blood pressure and cholesterol under control.
5. Exercise regularly.
6. Regular visits with your Primary Care Physician (PCP).

*If I develop Diabetic Retinopathy, what can be done about it?

1. In mild cases adjustment of your medication is needed, tighter control, diet and exercise.
2. In cases that threaten vision, you will need referral to a Retinal Specialist for necessary treatment such as laser surgery or injections in the eye.

If you need help in controlling your diet or changing your lifestyle, there are Diabetic classes locally that provide you with menus, support, and wonderful ideas to make your Diabetes easier to handle. Ask our clinic or your PCP!