



# DIABETES

REGULAR EYE EXAMS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Annual eye exams are a crucial part of health care for people with diabetes. Changes in the eye due to diabetes can be detected during an eye exam, and are often the first indication that a person may have the disease, or that a person with diabetes does not have adequate blood sugar control. Diabetes is a chronic disease that prevents your body from making or using insulin.

## COST OF DIABETIC EXAM

All Saskatchewan beneficiaries with a valid Saskatchewan Health Card who have been diagnosed with diabetes type 1 or 2 are eligible for an insured annual diabetic eye exam. A physician's referral is not required to receive an insured diabetic eye exam; however, for those non-medicated patients, a letter confirming the patient's diagnosis is recommended.

## SYMPTOMS

In the early stages, retinopathy is often without symptoms, so regular eye exams are the best way to detect changes. Diabetes and its complications can affect many parts of the eye. Diabetes can cause changes in nearsightedness, farsightedness and premature presbyopia — the inability to focus on close objects. It can result in early cataracts, glaucoma, paralysis of the nerves that control the eye muscles or pupil, and decreased corneal sensitivity. Visual symptoms of diabetes include fluctuating or blurring of vision, occasional double vision, loss of visual field, and flashes and floaters within the eyes.

# DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

Diabetic retinopathy occurs when there is a weakening or swelling of the tiny blood vessels inside your eye, resulting in blood leakage, the growth of new blood vessels and other changes. If diabetic retinopathy is left untreated, blindness can result. Diabetic retinopathy can affect people with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

## TREATMENT

In the early stages, diabetic retinopathy is monitored through eye health examinations. If necessary, it may be treated with injections of anti-VEGF therapy into the eye, or laser therapy. In other cases, retinal surgery may be necessary. Early detection of diabetic retinopathy is crucial, as treatment is much more likely to be successful at an early stage. Your optometrist can co-manage treatment with an ophthalmologist or retinal surgeon. People with diabetes should have annual eye exams, unless it has been recommended to have more frequent evaluations.

## PREVENTION

Stable blood sugar reduces the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy, so it is important to monitor and maintain control of your diabetes. Annual eye exams with your optometrist can help identify retinopathy as early as possible, so treatment can minimize damage. Also see your physician regularly and follow instructions about diet, exercise and medication.

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