

Checking your eyes with regular exams



It's important to find eye disease early

People living with diabetes may have changes in their vision as the disease progresses. Sometimes, symptoms may not be present, so regularly scheduled exams with your healthcare provider are encouraged to track any changes.

What is a comprehensive eye exam?

A comprehensive eye exam is a complete eye checkup done by an eye doctor, such as an optometrist (op-TOM-oh-trist) or an ophthalmologist (of-thal-MOL-oh-jist). It is a thorough exam to detect disease and damage, such as diabetic retinopathy. Diabetic retinopathy is swelling of the tiny blood vessels in the retina (at the back of the eye). This swelling can get worse over time. There may be no signs in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy.

Eye exam guidelines

- **Type 1 diabetes:** Yearly exams should start within 5 years of diagnosis.
- **Type 2 diabetes:** If you have type 2 diabetes, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) advises getting your initial eye exam at the time of your diagnosis. If you have signs of diabetic retinopathy on your initial exam, you'll need eye exams at least annually. If there's no evidence of retinopathy, the ADA recommends that people with diabetes get dilated and comprehensive eye exams at least every two years.

Below are four common eye exams:

Exam type	What happens during this test?
Visual acuity test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You read an eye chart to measure how well you see at various distances.
Dilated eye exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drops are placed in your eyes to make your pupils larger. Your eye doctor uses a special lens to examine the back of your eye.
Eye pressure test, called a tonometry (toe-NOM-uh-tree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drops may be placed in your eyes to numb them. Your eye doctor may use a tool or a puff of air on the surface of your eye to measure the pressure.
Slit-lamp exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small light is used during this exam to allow the doctor to see different parts of the eye. Dye drops may be used to help the doctor see signs of damage to the eye.



Making your appointment

Life is busy. Going to the eye doctor may not be on your mind, but when eye disease is caught early, your healthcare provider may be able to treat it. **Remember to ask at your next office visit when you should make your next eye appointment.**

Together with your eye doctor, you can help protect your sight.

The steps below can help you get the most from your appointment:

STEP 1 Some health plans may cover comprehensive eye exams for people with diabetes. Ask your insurance provider for the name of an eye doctor who is covered under your plan. **Write the doctor's name and telephone number here:**

Dr. Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

STEP 2 Call your eye doctor. Write your appointment date and time here:

Date: _____ Time: _____

STEP 3 **Prepare for your appointment.**

- Be sure to bring a list of all the medicines you take.
- Bring sunglasses or dark glasses with you. If you can, make plans to have someone drive you home.

STEP 4 **During your appointment.** Your eye doctor will likely use eye drops to dilate your eyes. This may make your vision blurry and sensitive to light. It may help to wear sunglasses or to wait until your vision is clear before driving.

STEP 5 **Discuss the results.** After your exam, ask the eye doctor to send the results to your primary care physician. Talk about the results at your next visit.



For more information about diabetes and your eyes, visit the American Diabetes Association website at www.diabetes.org. For more information call **1-800-DIABETES** (1-800-342-2383).