

Diabetes and Your Eyes



Did you know that an eye exam can be the first clue to detecting diabetes and other hidden health concerns? Finding these issues early can give patients a better chance at preventing damage through early treatment and management.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is defined as a group of diseases characterized by high blood glucose levels that result from defects in the body's ability to produce and/or use insulin.

One of the well-known effects of diabetes is eye and vision damage caused by diabetic retinopathy. This means that delicate blood vessels in the eye swell or bleed. They may also grow abnormally on the retina itself. This allows unprocessed blood sugars, fats, and proteins to leak out of weakened blood vessels. That's what damages the retina and can cause vision loss.

Roughly 90% of diabetes-related blindness can be avoided by getting an annual eye exam.

Diabetes Facts

1. There are over 4 million people living with diabetes in the UK, including approximately 31,500 children and young people under the age of 19.¹ An estimated 549,000 people in the UK have diabetes but have not yet been diagnosed.²
2. By 2025, it is estimated that five million people in the UK will have diabetes.³
3. Diabetes is the leading cause of preventable sight loss in people of working age in the UK.⁴
4. People with diabetes have nearly 50 percent increased risk of developing glaucoma especially if they also have high blood pressure⁵ and up to a threefold increased risk of developing cataracts.⁶
5. In total, NHS spends an estimated £14 billion pounds per year on treating diabetes and its complications, with the cost of treating complications representing the much higher cost. This equates to over £25,000 being spent on diabetes every minute.⁷
6. Gestational diabetes affects at least five in every 100 expectant women who do not have diabetes before their pregnancy.⁸

1. www.diabetes.ie. 2, 3. International Diabetes Federation Diabetes Atlas (2013) www.idf.org/sites/default/files/EN_6E_Atlas_Full_0.pdf. 4. Newman-Casey, PA et al. (2011) The Relationship Between Components of Metabolic Syndrome and Open-Angle Glaucoma. *Ophthalmology* 118(7): 318–1326. 5. Mukesh, BN et al (2006) Development of Cataract and Associated Risk Factors: The Visual Impairment Project. *Arch Ophthalmology*: 124(1):79-85. 6. Clarke A. Diabetes care: Securing the future. Action plan for implementation of the St. Vincent declaration. Dublin: Diabetes Service Development Group; 2002. 7. <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Documents/gestational-diabetes/0302A-gestational-diabetes-guide-0915.pdf>.

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