

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.



November is National Diabetes Awareness Month

According to the American Diabetes Association®, 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 and Pre-diabetes Facts

Here are some surprising facts about diabetes.

- 54 million Americans have pre-diabetes and most don't know it.
- Nearly 24 million Americans have diabetes
- One in three people with diabetes don't know they have it
- Diabetes accounts for about 24,000 new cases of vision loss each year
- Recent research by the U.S. National Eye Institute showed that 8% of pre-diabetics were already showing signs of retinopathy
- Lifestyle risks for diabetes are physical inactivity, poor diet, and obesity
- Diabetes has genetic factors like family history and ethnicity—Black Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, Asian and Pacific Islanders are at higher risk
- Others at higher risk include older individuals, those with gestational diabetes, and babies weighing more than nine pounds at birth