

# Diabetes and Vision Loss: Assess Your Risk



FIGHTING  
BLINDNESS  
CANADA

If you have diabetes, it is important to manage your condition to help protect your eye health.

Diabetic retinopathy and diabetic macular edema are eye conditions that can result from long term high blood sugar level.

Diabetes also puts you at higher risk of developing other eye diseases like glaucoma and cataracts.



## WHAT IS DIABETIC RETINOPATHY?

A complication from diabetes that is caused by damage to the blood vessels in the retina. High blood sugar damages or blocks these vessels. Early diabetic retinopathy may not have symptoms. **As damage in the retina gets worse, you may experience:**

- Floaters (small spots or dots) in your vision
- Blurred vision
- Color distortion
- Blind spots

## WHAT IS DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA?

If diabetic retinopathy is not treated, damaged blood vessels in the retina may leak fluid into the middle of the retina, called the macula. Diabetic macular edema is a serious complication of diabetic retinopathy and requires treatment to prevent blindness. **Symptoms of diabetic macular edema resemble symptoms of advanced retinopathy:**

- Blurred vision
- Color distortion
- Vision loss

Fighting Blindness Canada is the largest charitable funder of vision research in Canada. We offer hope to Canadians by funding the best, most promising research that is driving treatments and cures for blinding eye diseases.

# WHAT HEALTHY HABITS HELP PREVENT VISION LOSS?

The longer you have diabetes and the less controlled your blood sugar levels, the more likely you are to develop diabetic retinopathy or macular edema. Practicing these habits can help protect your vision:

- Monitor** Keep track of your blood sugar and blood pressure.
- Screening** Book regular appointments with your eye doctor to identify changes to your vision. Yearly eye exams are free in Canada if you have been diagnosed with diabetes.
- Medication** Take all your prescribed medication as instructed by your doctor.
- Lifestyle** Practice healthy habits like eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise. Speak to your doctor before starting any new form of exercise or diet regimen.
- Educate** Learn about your condition. The more you know, the better you can control your diabetes.

# ASSESS YOUR RISK OF VISION LOSS

Bring this handout to your next doctor and eye care visit (i.e. optometrist, ophthalmologist). Write down your questions in advance and ask your doctor to explain any answers you may be uncertain of.

Risk factors	My numbers	Questions for my doctor
Screening	The last time I had an <b>eye exam</b> was:	
Vision changes	Any <b>changes to my vision</b> I have noticed:	
Blood sugar	The last time I checked, my <b>blood sugar</b> was:	
Blood pressure	The last time I checked, my <b>blood pressure</b> was:	
Weight	The last time I checked, my <b>weight</b> was:	
Other symptoms	I have noticed these things about <b>my health</b> :	

# DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Contact our health information line if you have questions about your eye health:  
1.888.626.2995 or [healthinfo@fightingblindness.ca](mailto:healthinfo@fightingblindness.ca)