

Diabetic retinopathy

 lookafteryoureyes.org/eye-conditions/diabetic-retinopathy/

What is diabetic retinopathy?

If you have diabetic retinopathy, the small blood vessels in your retina leak blood and fluid into the retina – the light-sensitive layer of cells at the back of your eye. Although this does not affect your vision in the early stages, if it is left untreated it may lead to sight loss.

Who is affected by diabetic retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy affects people with type 1 or type 2 diabetes, especially if you:

- have high levels of blood sugar
- have high blood pressure
- have high cholesterol
- are pregnant
- are of Asian or Afro-Caribbean background.

You can reduce your chances of developing diabetic retinopathy by keeping your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels under control.

What are the symptoms of diabetic retinopathy?

The early stages of diabetic retinopathy do not usually have any particular symptoms, so if you are diabetic it is important that you are regularly checked for diabetic retinopathy. With a few exceptions, [the NHS arranges for all people who have diabetes and are aged 12 and over to be invited to have screening for diabetic retinopathy.](#) Most people with diabetes will need to have the screening done every year. It is very important that you have this done regularly, as early detection of diabetic retinopathy means that treatment is more effective.

If the condition progresses, you may experience the following symptoms:

- gradually worsening vision
- sudden vision loss
- shapes floating in your field of vision (floaters)
- blurred or patchy vision
- eye pain or redness.

How do you treat diabetic retinopathy?

You will usually be treated for diabetic retinopathy in hospital. The main treatments are:

- injections of medication into your eyes
- laser treatment

- an operation to remove blood or scar tissue from your eyes.

Diabetic retinopathy advice, information and support

[Diabetes.org.uk](https://www.diabetes.org.uk)

[RNIB.org.uk](https://www.rnib.org.uk)