



An eye exam by an eye specialist (ophthalmologist or optometrist) is the only way to find diabetic retinopathy. Having a dilated eye exam every year can help find retinopathy before it changes your vision. On your own, you may not notice symptoms until the disease becomes severe.

Issue 1, 2021

Contact Us
1-866-942-7966
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8:30 am–5:00 pm
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We Value Your Opinion

Please fill out a brief, anonymous survey at mvplistens.com.

All responses are 100% confidential and help create a better experience.

MVP Health Care offers a health management program for members living with diabetes. For more information or to see if you qualify, call **1-866-942-7966**. MVP's program is based on guidelines for adult diabetes care developed by the American Diabetes Association: A Collaborative Guideline for the Management of the Adult Patient with Diabetes.

Information in this newsletter does not constitute medical advice. If you have questions about your health, talk to your doctor.

Health benefit plans are issued or administered by MVP Health Plan, Inc.; MVP Health Insurance Company; MVP Select Care, Inc.; and MVP Health Services Corp., operating subsidiaries of MVP Health Care, Inc. Not all plans available in all states and counties.

What is Diabetic Retinopathy?

Retinopathy is a disease of the retina. The retina is the nerve layer that lines the back of your eye. It is the part of your eye that “takes pictures” and sends the images to your brain. Many people with diabetes get retinopathy. This kind of retinopathy is called diabetic retinopathy (retinal disease caused by diabetes).

Diabetic retinopathy can lead to poor vision and even blindness. Most of the time, it gets worse over many years. At first, the blood vessels in the eye get weak. This can lead to blood and other liquid leaking into the retina from the blood vessels. This is called “nonproliferative retinopathy,” and it is the most common retinopathy. If the fluid leaks into the center of your eye, you may have blurry vision. Most people with nonproliferative retinopathy have no symptoms.

What causes diabetic retinopathy?

If you are not able to keep your blood sugar levels in a target range, it can cause damage to your blood vessels. Diabetic retinopathy happens when high blood sugar damages the tiny blood vessels of the retina.

When you have diabetic retinopathy, high blood pressure can make it worse. High blood pressure can cause more damage to the weakened vessels in your eye, leading to more leaking of fluid or blood and clouding more of your vision.

What are the symptoms?

Most of the time, there are no symptoms of diabetic retinopathy until it starts to change your vision. When this happens, diabetic retinopathy is already severe. Having your eyes checked regularly can find diabetic retinopathy early enough to treat it and help prevent vision loss.

If you notice problems with your vision, call an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) right away. Changes in vision can be a sign of severe damage to your eye. These changes can include floaters, pain in the eye, blurry vision, or new vision loss.

Can diabetic retinopathy be prevented?

You can lower your chance of damaging small blood vessels in the eye by keeping your blood sugar levels and blood pressure levels within a target range. If you smoke, quit. All of this reduces the risk of damage to the retina. It can also help slow down how quickly your retinopathy gets worse and can prevent future vision loss.

Manage Diabetes with These Important Tests

There are certain tests and exams that people living with diabetes should have done at least yearly, to avoid any complications. Bring this list with you to your next doctor's visit to see if you are due for any of the following. Once completed, talk to your doctor about your results so you can understand what they mean to you.

Retinal Eye Exam

Get a retinal exam by an eye doctor every year because over time, diabetes can affect your eyes. Have this exam even if your primary care doctor has examined your eyes, and even if your vision seems fine.

Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c)

Have this test every six to 12 months to show your average blood sugar level over the previous three months. A result of less than 7% can reduce your risk of complications such as kidney damage, blindness, nerve damage, and circulation problems.

Urine Protein

This test checks for early signs of kidney problems which can be treated and can help prevent future problems.

LDL Level

Sometimes called "bad" cholesterol, it contributes to the formation of plaque in the arteries, which can lead to a heart attack.

Complete Foot Exam

People living with diabetes are prone to poor circulation, nerve damage, foot ulcers, and infections, which can lead to serious foot problems.

Also, always remember to take all medications as ordered by your doctor!

High or Low Blood Sugar in Kids

Young children with type 1 diabetes aren't able to recognize when their blood sugar level is high or low and then tell an adult. And sometimes it's even hard for a parent to tell the difference.

Some signs that may indicate high or low blood sugar in a very young child include:

- Irritability, anger, or crying
- Paleness
- Nervousness or trembling
- Staring off or not responding when touched or spoken to
- Dark urine with a strong sweet odor
- Drowsiness or difficulty waking up

When you see changes in your child, do a blood sugar test. It will show the actual blood sugar level, eliminating the guesswork.

Watch Now: Diabetes Webinar Series

Managing your diabetes throughout the year is important for your overall health and may help prevent future problems. This past November, MVP offered free educational webinars on different aspects of diabetes—and now, they're accessible online! If you couldn't attend live or want a refresher, watch our four-part series at your convenience and learn how to make healthy choices while living with diabetes. Visit mvphealthcare.com/medicalhealth and select *Diabetes*, and then *Watch MVP's Diabetes Education Webinar Series*.



MVP Medicare Members—

Don't Forget!

Your plan includes a \$0 co-pay for routine podiatry visits. To use your benefit, schedule a routine diabetic foot check with your podiatrist!

Be Mindful of **Your Mental Health**

When you are living with diabetes, you may have a lot on your mind. Tracking your blood sugar levels, dosing insulin, planning your meals, and staying active can be a lot to think about. That's why it's important to stay in touch with your emotions as you manage your diabetes. What are you feeling? **Overwhelmed? Stressed out? Sad? Scared?** Take time to take inventory of your emotions and reach out to those around you to talk honestly and openly about how you feel.

If you are feeling anxious or depressed and think you may need extra care or support, call your primary care provider (PCP), or your MVP Case Manager at **1-866-942-7966**.



Did you get your flu shot?

If not, visit your doctor or stop by your pharmacy to protect yourself and those around you.

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Are you due for important health screenings?

Regular screenings are important to help maintain your overall health. For screenings that are appropriate for your age and sex, visit mvphealthcare.com/PreventiveCare and talk to your doctor.

Quick Tips for Your Next Appointment

Patients who have good relationships with their doctors are more satisfied with their care and have better results. Whether your appointment is in-person or virtual, here are some tips to help you and your doctor become better partners in improving your health care:

- Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.
- Bring a “health history” list with you and keep it up to date.
- Always bring any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter, or a list of those medications (include when and how often you take them) and what strength.
- You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions and remember the answers.

Find more information and printable forms at mvphealthcare.com.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

