

Your guide to diabetic eye screening

Public Health England (PHE) created this information on behalf of the NHS. In this information, the word 'we' refers to the NHS service that provides screening.

This information explains diabetic eye screening and why it is offered.

Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss. As someone with diabetes, your eyes are at risk of damage from diabetic retinopathy. Screening can detect the condition early before you notice any changes to your vision.

Diabetic retinopathy

This condition occurs when diabetes affects small blood vessels, damaging the part of the eye called the retina. It can cause the blood vessels in the retina to leak or become blocked. This can affect your sight.

Importance of screening



Diabetic eye screening using digital photography

Eye screening is an important part of your diabetes care. Untreated diabetic retinopathy is one of the most common causes of sight loss. When the condition is caught early, treatment is effective at reducing or preventing damage to your sight.

Diabetic eye screening is not covered as part of your normal eye examination with an optician. Screening does not look for other eye conditions and you should continue to visit your optician regularly for an eye examination as well.

The screening test



Eye drops being administered before a screening test

We put drops in your eyes to temporarily make your pupils larger. You may find the drops sting.

We take photographs of the back of your eyes. The camera does not come into contact with your eyes. We send the photographs to an expert to review.

The appointment will last around 30 minutes.

We send a letter to you and your GP within 6 weeks letting you know your screening results.

When screening is offered

We invite everyone with diabetes aged 12 and over for diabetic eye screening once a year.

Side effects

Eye drops may affect your vision for a few hours, so you should not drive after your appointment.

Possible results

An expert studies the photographs of your eyes after you have been screened.

If there are any problems or more questions, we may call you back for another assessment.

Screening can detect:

- early signs of retinopathy
- if you need a follow-up appointment to see whether you need treatment
- if you need to have more frequent checks

Practical hints and tips on the day

Bring all the glasses and contact lenses you wear along with lens solution for contacts.

Bring sunglasses as your eyes can feel sensitive after the eye drops.

You may want to bring someone with you to the appointment.

Eye drops may affect your vision for a few hours, so you should not drive after your appointment.

Remember: eye screening is just a part of managing your diabetes and diabetic retinopathy is treatable, especially if it is caught early.

How you can help

You can help to reduce your risk if you:

- control your blood glucose as effectively as possible
- see your doctor regularly to check your blood pressure is not raised
- attend your diabetic eye screening appointments
- get advice if you have a problem with your sight
- take your medication as prescribed
- exercise regularly

More information

See your screening invitation letter for details of what you need to do next.

You can read more about eye screening and diabetic retinopathy at www.nhs.uk/diabeticseye and www.diabetes.org.uk/retinopathy.

The NHS Screening Programmes use personal information from your NHS records to invite you for screening at the right time. Public Health England also uses your information to ensure you receive high quality care and to improve the screening programmes. Find out more about how your information is used and protected, and your options, at www.gov.uk/phe/screening-data. Find out how to opt out of screening at www.gov.uk/phe/screening-opt-out.

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