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Patient education: What is Diabetic retinopathy?

This eye problem can lead to vision loss and even blindness. Having blood sugar levels that are above goal increases the risk of retinopathy.

What are the symptoms of Diabetic retinopathy?

Most people have no symptoms during the early stages of the disease. This is when treatment works best. For this reason, it is important to be screened for the condition early. That way, you and your doctors can take steps to protect your eyes before your vision is damaged.

When symptoms start, they can include:

- Blurry vision
- Dark or floating spots
- Trouble seeing things that are at the center of your focus when reading or driving
- Trouble telling colors apart

Is there a test for Diabetic retinopathy?

Yes. There are 2 main tests to check for diabetic retinopathy:

- **Dilated eye exam** – The eye doctor gives you eye drops to make your pupils wider. (The drops make it easier for the doctor to see the different parts of the inside of your eye.) Then, the doctor looks at the back of your eye, called the retina. That's the part that is damaged by diabetic retinopathy.
- **Digital retinal imaging** – A technician takes pictures of your eye with a special camera. They send the pictures to an eye doctor, who checks for disease. It is OK to use this test if your past eye tests have all been normal. Otherwise, you should have a dilated eye exam.

People with diabetes should have their eyes checked regularly. If you have retinopathy, you need to get checked at least once a year, maybe more. If not, you might only need to get checked every 2 years. Your doctor will work with you to decide on a schedule.

- If you have type 1 diabetes, eye exams should start 3 to 5 years after diagnosis.
- If you have type 2 diabetes, eye exams should start right after diagnosis.

How is Diabetic retinopathy treated?

Keeping your blood sugar and blood pressure levels in the goal range can help prevent diabetic retinopathy from getting worse.

Can Diabetic retinopathy be prevented?

Yes. If you have diabetes, you can reduce your chances of getting diabetic retinopathy by keeping your blood sugar and blood pressure levels as close to your goal as possible. It might also be important to keep cholesterol levels in the normal range.

When should I call a doctor?

If you notice any changes in your vision, tell your doctor right away.

To schedule an appointment please call 1-888-296-GPHA (4742)