

What is it?

Diabetes is not just a disease that affects your blood sugar levels. High blood sugar levels can also change the shape of the lens in your eye, causing blurry vision. This problem eases when blood sugar levels are stable.

Diabetes can also cause vision loss by damaging the tiny blood vessels on the back of the eye. This is known as diabetic retinopathy. In the early stages you may have no symptoms. Symptoms may only appear when the disease is advanced. Cataracts are more common in people with diabetes and occur at a younger age.

Almost all vision loss from diabetes is preventable. That's why eye screening is so important. It's how you can check the health of your eyes at least every year.

What will my GP do now?

At the screening your GP may:

- Take (or request that an optometrist take) special pictures of the back of your eye (retinal photograph)
- Test your vision by having you read letters on a standard eye test chart
- Look for cataracts

If your GP detects any problems, they may refer you to a specialist or an optometrist. Your GP may want to see you every three to six months for ongoing monitoring.

What can I do?

Have your eyes checked regularly (at least every year) to pick up early signs of damage. Work with your GP to keep your blood glucose levels in your target range. Maintain a healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How often should I have my eyes checked?*
- Am I at risk of other complications?*
- What eye damage signs should I look for?*
- Do I need to see an ophthalmologist?*



What supports are available?

Your GP may refer you to one of the special diabetes services operated at:

- Bankstown Hospital: **9722 8360**
- Fairfield Hospital: **9616 8510**
- Liverpool Hospital: **8738 4577**
- Bowral and District Hospital: **4861 0303**
- Campbelltown Hospital: **4634 4028**

These units provide a team of healthcare professionals to support people with diabetes, their family members, and carers. You also have the option of seeing a private optometrist for eye screening.

Where can I learn more?

- **Check Today, See Tomorrow, Get Your Eyes Checked Yearly:** mspgh.unimelb.edu.au
- **Diabetes NSW** – your eyes and diabetes: diabetesnsw.com.au
- **Lions Eye Institute** – outback vision diabetic retinopathy video: www.youtube.com