

RETINOPATHY

What is Retinopathy?

There are two major types of retinopathy, or eye damage, called non-proliferative and proliferative retinopathy. People with diabetes are at a high risk for developing eye damage if glucose levels are uncontrolled, or if they have had diabetes for a long period of time. Unfortunately, almost everyone with Type 1 diabetes, and most with Type 2 diabetes, will eventually develop non-proliferative retinopathy. The two types of eye damage related to diabetes are defined below.

Non-proliferative – this is the most common form of eye damage. It is the blocking of the blood vessels in the eye. There are 3 stages: mild, moderate, and severe depending on how badly the vessels are blocked.

Proliferative – this eye damage progresses after several years, and is more severe. This occurs when the blood vessels become so blocked they become closed off and then create new, more fragile, blood vessels. These new blood vessels can leak blood into the eye, as well as cause scar tissue build up, leading to blurry vision and eventually blindness.

What can I do to prevent or treat Retinopathy?

Uncontrolled blood glucose, uncontrolled blood pressure, length of time you have diabetes, and family history are all factors for developing retinopathy. The only symptom that can occur for retinopathy is poor vision. See the list below to see how you can reduce risk or delay onset of eye damage.

- Control blood glucose levels by taking medications as directed (if applicable). This is because high blood glucose can cause the blood vessels of the eye to break leading to eye damage.
- Follow a healthy diet and exercise regularly.
- Control your blood pressure.
- Make an appointment for an eye exam every year to check your vision and screen for eye disease or damage.

** Information herein adapted from American Diabetes Association*