



NHS Tayside Diabetes Managed Clinical Network Patient Information Leaflet

Diabetes and Looking After Your Eyes

Why your eyes need to be checked

If you have diabetes and are over 12 years old you will have the opportunity to have your eyes checked (screened) each year. As part of the national screening programme you will be sent an annual invitation for eye screening.

Everyone with diabetes runs the risk of developing an eye disease called **Diabetic Retinopathy**. Development or progression of diabetic retinopathy can be prevented by good control of your blood sugar and blood pressure.

Diabetic retinopathy causes damage to the blood vessels at the back of the eye and is the most common cause of blindness among people with diabetes. In the early stages, diabetic retinopathy does not cause any symptoms such as pain or loss of sight, so you may not realise you are developing this condition. Once symptoms are present, it may be more difficult or even impossible to treat the condition.

Regular eye screening checks are **vital** and should be done **once a year**

Children with diabetes should start to have regular eye examinations at age 12 years.

Temporary Changes in your eye sight

You may have noticed changes to your sight around the time you were diagnosed as having diabetes. Your sight may have become blurred at times due to higher than normal blood sugar levels affecting the lenses in your eyes. These changes settle once your treatment is established and your blood sugar levels return to near normal values.

You should wait for 2 to 3 months after diagnosis of diabetes before you visit your Optician for a sight test and/or a change of glasses.

If your diabetes treatment is altered you may notice slight changes again as your blood sugar levels are lowered, especially if they were initially quite high. These will settle as you adjust to your new treatment.

Any **sudden change** in vision should be reported to your doctor immediately.

What happens at eye screening?

You will be sent clear instructions on where and when to attend for screening. If the time and/or date of your appointment is not suitable, contact the number shown on the invitation letter as soon as possible so that a new appointment can be made.

Each appointment usually takes about ten minutes. Your eyesight is tested first; remember to bring your distance glasses with you! Then a photograph is taken of each eye.

This is done in a darkened room to allow the pupils of the eye to enlarge and enable a good photograph of the back of the eye to be obtained. Most people will **not** require having drops applied to their eyes. In a small percentage of people, the pupils will not dilate sufficiently. In this case, eye drops will then be used to make your pupils wider. If eye drops are used, you may become temporarily sensitive to bright light (so you may wish to bring sunglasses) and also your vision may be blurred for several hours. **You will be advised not to drive until your vision returns to normal and may need someone to take you home.**

Where is eye screening carried out?

If you live in Dundee or Perth City your eye screening will be carried out at a fixed clinic, currently situated at the Diabetes Centre in Ninewells Hospital or Perth Royal Infirmary.

If you live in Perthshire and Angus, there are two mobile eye vans that travel to GP surgeries.

What happens after eye screening?

The photographs are examined by an expert and are kept from year to year for comparison. You will be informed of the result by post in approximately 1 month after screening.

If the eye photograph is abnormal or if there is uncertainty, you may be invited to attend a specialist eye clinic in Tayside and be seen by an Ophthalmologist. We will automatically arrange an appointment for you.

If any significant changes due to diabetes are found in your eyes, early treatment in most cases will protect your sight.

The photographs form part of your Computer Diabetes Record, and you will be able to see these by asking your GP or Practice Nurse.

What else do you need to know?

If you wear contact lenses, you may be asked to remove them during screening.

In addition to your annual eye screening visit, you are entitled to a free sight check at your Optician.

**If you have any concerns or worries about your eyes,
talk about them with your diabetes care team.**

If your vision suddenly changes, contact your doctor at once.

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