

GENERAL INFORMATION

# DIABETIC EYE DISEASE



vision  
eye institute

---

# WHAT IS DIABETIC EYE DISEASE?

**Diabetic eye disease is a term used to describe the common eye complications seen in people with diabetes. It includes:**

- Diabetic retinopathy (including diabetic macular oedema)
- Cataracts
- Glaucoma.

Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in working-age adults. People with type 1 and type 2 diabetes are at risk. It's possible to be unaware that you have severe diabetic eye disease and suddenly go blind.

---

## **MOST CASES OF BLINDNESS CAN BE PREVENTED WITH REGULAR EYE EXAMINATIONS AND PROPER CARE.<sup>1</sup>**

### **REFERENCES**

1. Vision 2020 Australia, Diabetes Australia and Centre for Eye Research Australia. The case for an Australian Diabetes Blindness Prevention Initiative. Available at [diabetesaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Case-for-an-Australian-Diabetes-Blindness-Prevention-Initiative.pdf](http://diabetesaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Case-for-an-Australian-Diabetes-Blindness-Prevention-Initiative.pdf) (Accessed 14 October 2025).
2. Macular Disease Foundation Australia. About diabetic retinopathy. Available at HYPERLINK "<http://www/www.mdfoundation.com.au/about-macular-disease/diabetic-eye-disease/about-diabetic-retinopathy/>" (Accessed 14 October 2025).

---

# DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

The persistently high blood sugar levels that occur with diabetes can damage the retina's small blood vessels (capillaries), which deliver oxygen and nutrients.

Diabetic retinopathy affects up to a third of people with diabetes over the age of 50<sup>2</sup> and there are three main types:

## 1. NON-PROLIFERATIVE DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

This is the early stage of the disease in which capillary damage results in blood and fluid leaking into the retina, causing it to swell.

Depending on the number of vessels affected, there is usually minimal or no effect on vision.

## 2. DIABETIC MACULAR OEDEMA

Diabetic macular oedema occurs if swelling extends to the macula, which is the part of the retina responsible for central vision.

Diabetic macular oedema (swelling) is the usual cause of vision loss related to diabetes and the level of impairment can be significant.

## 3. PROLIFERATIVE DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

Proliferative diabetic retinopathy is the advanced stage of the disease. In an attempt to supply the retina with more oxygenated blood, abnormal blood vessels start to grow, but these are fragile and bleed easily.

This can lead to the formation of scar tissue. If these new vessels bleed, the person may see 'floaters' or even lose all vision. This requires emergency treatment.



## How is diabetic retinopathy treated?

Various treatments are available and vision can often be partially recovered.

The earlier the condition is diagnosed and monitored the better, as this provides the best chance of preventing severe vision loss and/or recovering vision. Earlier stages of damage require more frequent monitoring, while treatment is necessary for sight-threatening disease.

- **Eye (intravitreal) injections:** medication is injected into the vitreous humour (the gel-like fluid that fills the eye and gives it its shape). The medication reduces fluid and swelling in the retina by shrinking abnormal blood vessels and inhibiting growth of new blood vessels.
- **Retinal laser treatment:** uses heat from a laser to seal or destroy leaking or malfunctioning blood vessels or reduce swelling at the macula. A special microscope known as a slit lamp is used together with the laser to perform the procedure.
- **Vitrectomy surgery:** may be required for severe cases of diabetic retinopathy. This involves removing some of the vitreous and any blood so that light rays can focus on the retina again. Scar tissue from the retina can also be removed and retinal detachments repaired.





## What are the symptoms of diabetic eye disease?

Diabetic eye conditions often have no signs or symptoms, particularly in the early stages. By the time someone with diabetes notices changes in their vision, the condition is quite advanced.

Signs and symptoms may include:

- Blurry, cloudy or dim vision
- Floaters and flashes
- Poor night vision
- Sensitivity to light and glare
- Double vision, seeing halos around lights
- Trouble reading
- Frequent changes in spectacle and contact lens prescriptions
- Eye pain
- Headaches, nausea, vomiting.



# COMPREHENSIVE EYE CARE



Scan the QR code to learn more about this service on our website

Vision Eye Institute is the largest private provider of ophthalmic services in Australia. Our team of highly regarded doctors includes general ophthalmologists as well as those who specialise in specific areas/conditions of the eye.

LASER EYE SURGERY



CATARACT & LENS SURGERY



GLAUCOMA



DIABETIC EYE DISEASE



MACULAR DEGENERATION



RETINAL CONDITIONS



KERATOCONUS



DRY EYE



PTERYGIUM



CORNEAL TRANSPLANTATION



CORNEAL CONDITIONS



NERVE-RELATED VISION PROBLEMS



RECONSTRUCTIVE EYE SURGERY



CHILDREN'S EYE HEALTH



GENERAL EYE HEALTH



## OUR DIABETIC EYE DISEASE CLINICS

For more information or to find a Vision Eye Institute clinic that treats diabetic eye disease, visit:

[visioneyeinstitute.com.au/services/diabetic-eye-disease/](https://visioneyeinstitute.com.au/services/diabetic-eye-disease/)

This information is general in nature. All medical and surgical procedures have potential benefits and risks. Consult your ophthalmologist for specific medical advice.



[visioneyeinstitute.com.au](https://visioneyeinstitute.com.au)



Transforming lives. That's our vision.