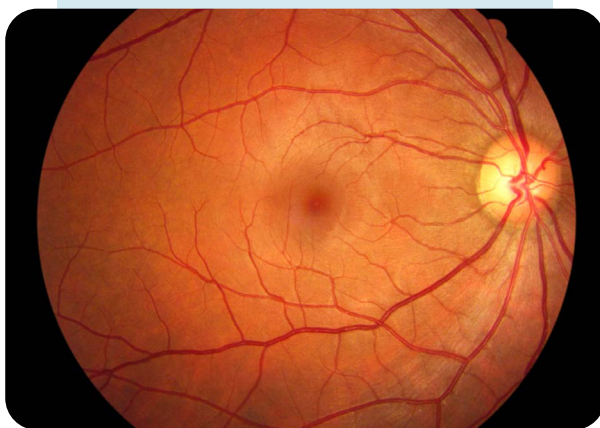


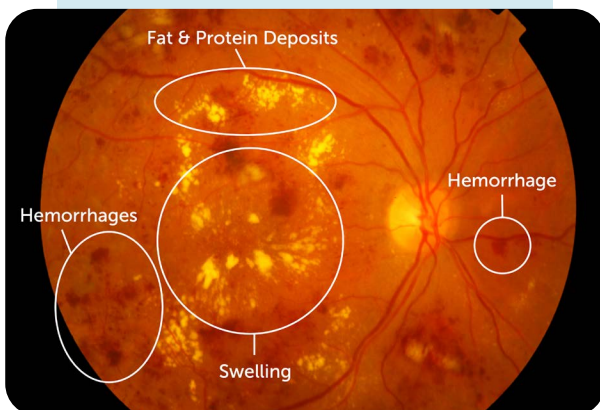
# What You Should Know About Diabetic Retinopathy

## Anyone with Diabetes can Develop Diabetic Retinopathy

Over time, diabetes damages the blood vessels in your body. Your retina is made up of many small blood vessels. When these vessels are damaged by diabetes, this is called diabetic retinopathy and/or diabetic macular edema. Diabetic retinopathy and diabetic macular edema can cause hemorrhages, swelling, and fat and protein deposits in the retina. Most of the time, patients have no symptoms and are not aware these changes are occurring without a dilated eye exam.



Healthy Eye

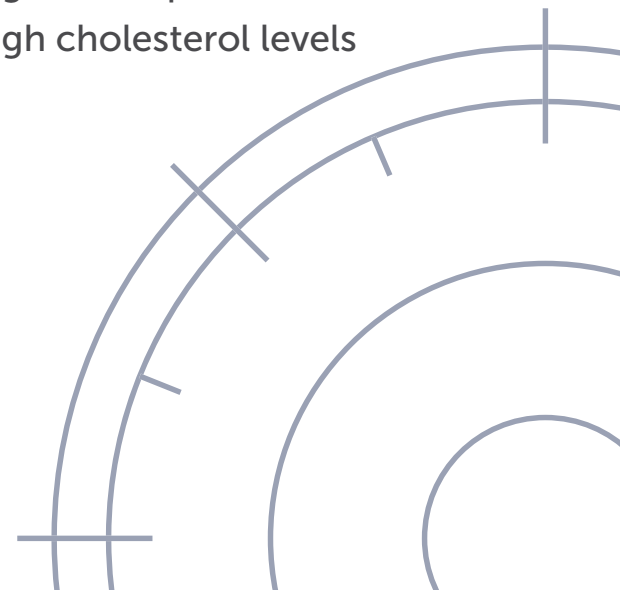


Eye with Diabetic Retinopathy  
and Diabetic Macular Edema

PHOTO CREDIT: Peter Kaiser, MD.

## What can I do to prevent diabetic retinopathy?

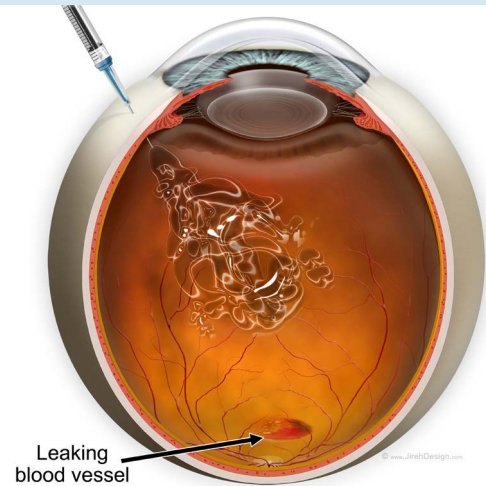
- Undergo a dilated eye exam at least once a year
- Keep blood sugar levels in your target range
- Eat healthy foods
- Exercise
- Take your medications
- Lower high blood pressure
- Lower high cholesterol levels



# What if I have Diabetic Retinopathy?

## How can I manage diabetic retinopathy?

- See your eye doctor regularly
- Take steps to control your
  - Blood sugar
  - Blood pressure
  - Cholesterol
- Injections of anti-VEGF drugs
- Laser treatment
- Eye surgery
- Treat early before there is permanent vision loss



**Treatment with anti-VEGF drugs.**

## What are anti-VEGF drugs?

- VEGF stands for vascular endothelial growth factor
- Anti-VEGF drugs block the growth factors that cause blood vessels to leak and swell
- Cases of advanced diabetic retinopathy or diabetic macular edema may be treated with anti-VEGF injections



**Floaters and swirls can occur after anti-VEGF injections.**

## What can I expect with anti-VEGF injections?

- When you get an injection, the doctor will
  - Numb your eye for comfort
  - Clean your eye to prevent infection
  - Place the medicine inside your eye using a very small needle (you may feel pressure during this step)
- After the injection
  - Use artificial tears to ease any irritation
  - A small amount of bleeding, like a bruise, sometimes occurs from the needle; this usually heals within 1 week
  - You may experience floaters or swirls; this will go away within 3-4 days
  - Continue to follow up with your retina specialist
  - Severe complications are rare, approximately 1 out of every 5,000 injections

### References:

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