



Public Health  
England

**NHS**



# Your guide to **diabetic eye screening**



## Why should I be screened?

Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss. As someone with diabetes, your eyes are at risk of damage from diabetic retinopathy. Screening can detect the condition early before you notice any changes to your vision.

### What is diabetic retinopathy?

This condition occurs when diabetes affects small blood vessels, damaging the part of the eye called the retina. It can cause the blood vessels in the retina to leak or become blocked. This can affect your sight.

### Why is screening important?

Eye screening is a key part of your diabetes care. Untreated diabetic retinopathy is one of the most common causes of sight loss. When the condition is caught early, treatment is effective at reducing or preventing damage to your sight.

Remember, diabetic eye screening is not covered as part of your normal eye examination with an optician. Screening does not look for other eye conditions and you should continue to visit your optician regularly for an eye examination as well.



## What will happen?



We put drops in your eyes to temporarily make your pupils larger. You may find the drops sting.



We take photographs of the back of your eyes. The camera does not come into contact with your eyes. We send the photographs to an expert to review.



The appointment will last approximately **30 minutes**.



We send a letter to you and your GP within **6 weeks** letting you know your screening results.

# Answering your questions



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## How often?

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Screening is offered every year to anyone with diabetes aged 12 and over.

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## Are there any side effects?

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Eye drops may affect your vision for a few hours, so you should not drive after your appointment.

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## What if something is wrong?

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An expert studies the photographs of your eyes after you have been screened. If there are any problems or more questions, we may call you back for another assessment.

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## What could screening find?

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### Screening can detect:

- Early signs of retinopathy
- If you need a follow up appointment to see whether you need treatment
- If you need to have more frequent checks

# What do I need to think about on the day?

## Practical hints and tips

- Bring all the glasses and contact lenses you wear along with lens solution for contacts
- Bring sunglasses as your eyes can feel sensitive after the eye drops
- You may want to bring someone with you to the appointment
- Eye drops may affect your vision for a few hours, so you should not drive after your appointment

**REMEMBER:** Eye screening is just a part of managing your diabetes and diabetic retinopathy is treatable, especially if it is caught early.



Find out how Public Health England and the NHS use and protect your screening information at [www.gov.uk/phe/screening-data](http://www.gov.uk/phe/screening-data).

To opt out of screening, see [www.gov.uk/phe/screening-opt-out](http://www.gov.uk/phe/screening-opt-out).



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## You can help to reduce your risk if you:

- Control your blood glucose as effectively as possible
- See your doctor regularly to check your blood pressure is not raised
- Attend your diabetic eye screening appointments
- Get advice if you have a problem with your sight
- Take your medication as prescribed

### For more information

See the accompanying letter for details of what you need to do next.



You can read more about eye screening and diabetic retinopathy at:  
[www.nhs.uk/diabeticeye](http://www.nhs.uk/diabeticeye)  
[www.diabetes.org.uk/retinopathy](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/retinopathy)

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Reference: DES01 - PN1316704