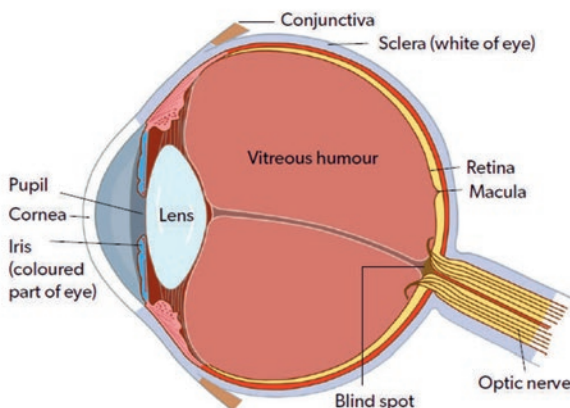


# DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

## What is diabetic retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy is the most common eye condition for people with diabetes.

It is caused by high blood sugar levels damaging the retina. The retina is the light-sensitive layer of cells at the back of the eye that converts light into electrical signals. These signals are sent to the brain which interprets them as the images we see. The retina receives a constant supply of blood through tiny blood vessels. However, over time a consistently high blood sugar level can damage these blood vessels.



**Anyone with diabetes, (either type 1 or 2) is at risk of developing diabetic retinopathy. 45% of diagnosed diabetics have some stage of the condition.**

## How do I know if I have a problem?

**There are usually no symptoms until the condition reaches a later stage, when changes in vision will become noticeable.**

Anyone diagnosed with diabetes is eligible for a free eye test every year, and in addition to this people with diabetes who are over 12 are invited for free annual retinal screening. During this screening a photograph of the back of the eye will be taken that can identify any signs of the condition.

## What treatment is available?

**In the early stages of diabetic retinopathy, no treatment is needed.**

The condition can be managed by controlling blood sugar levels, blood pressure and cholesterol. When the condition is more advanced, laser surgery is used to shrink the problematic blood vessels. Laser surgery reduces the risk of blindness by up to 90% but it can not restore any vision that has already been lost. It also works best when it is performed before the blood vessels have swollen and started leaking fluid, so early detection is vital.

## How do I get help?

If you have been diagnosed with diabetes it is important that you have regular eye tests as early detection of diabetic retinopathy is the best way to protect against potential vision loss. If you are worried you may have diabetic retinopathy you should visit your optometrist or doctor at the earliest opportunity.