

Many people with diabetes can develop an eye disease called diabetic retinopathy. It is a major cause of vision loss and blindness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but it is preventable.

**"I didn't listen,
I never realised,
that diabetes can
affect your eyes"**

How Do I Prevent Vision Loss From Diabetic Retinopathy?

- ✓ If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander with diabetes, it is important to have your eyes checked at least YEARLY to detect problems before your vision is affected.
- ✓ Good diabetes management is essential to prevent vision loss from diabetic retinopathy. Talk with your health worker, diabetes educator or doctor about controlling your blood sugar (glucose), blood pressure and cholesterol levels to reduce vision loss.
- ✓ In its early stages, diabetic retinopathy can have no symptoms. But as it gets worse, eye damage from diabetes leads to vision loss.
- ✓ Vision loss from diabetes is preventable if it is detected early, and treatment is followed.
- ✓ If you notice any changes in your eyes, see your doctor or optometrist immediately.

For more information and support on your diabetes and eye health, contact your Aboriginal Health Service or local clinic.



This brochure and other '**Check Today, See Tomorrow**' resources are part of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision toolkit developed by Indigenous Eye Health at The University of Melbourne. For more information, please visit: www.ihu.unimelb.edu.au



**CHECK TODAY,
SEE TOMORROW**

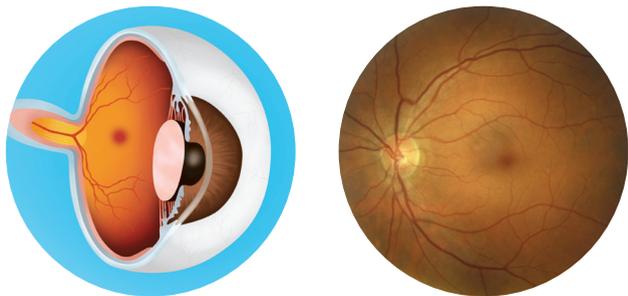
**Diabetes can cause blindness.
Get your eyes
checked YEARLY.**



What Is Diabetic Retinopathy?

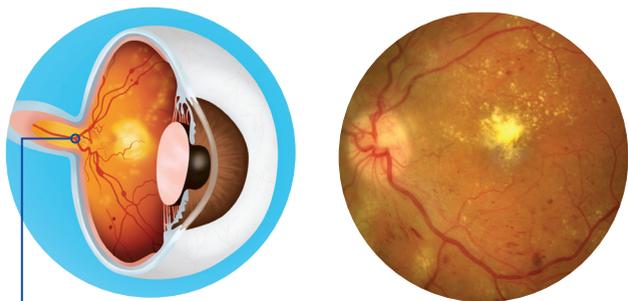
Diabetes causes damage to the blood vessels in the retina at the back of your eye.

Normal Eye



These blood vessels may swell and leak fluid into the retina. If this progresses **new abnormal blood vessels grow and bleed**. If left untreated this can lead to severe vision loss and blindness.

Sight-threatening stage (non-proliferative) of diabetic retinopathy



Abnormal growth of blood vessels



How Does Diabetic Retinopathy Cause Vision Loss?

You can have diabetic retinopathy and not know it. There are no signs or symptoms in the early stage of diabetic retinopathy.



Normal vision



Diabetic Retinopathy (spots in vision from bleeding in retina)

However, if diabetic retinopathy gets worse, you may notice symptoms such as floaters or spots in your vision, blurred vision or changes in your near or distance vision.

If you notice any of these signs or symptoms you should see your local clinic immediately.

How Is Diabetic Retinopathy Detected?

The only way to detect diabetic retinopathy is through an eye check or full eye examination. An eye check can show early signs of damage from diabetes even before you notice your vision is affected.

'Don't be shame go and get an eye check'

An eye check can also detect other changes and problems with your eyes and vision.

The Eye Check For People With Diabetes Must Include:

a. A test of how well you see (Visual Acuity)

read an eye chart to measure how well you see at different distances.

b. A look at the back of your eyes (Retinal Examination)

a photograph taken of the back of your eye, or a retinal examination using an ophthalmoscope or slit lamp by an eye specialist (optometrist or ophthalmologist).

Drops may be put in your eye to dilate (widen) your pupil to see the retina clearly.

Your health worker, nurse or doctor may be able to provide your eye check if they have access to a retinal camera, otherwise you will be referred to an eye specialist.

It is important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with diabetes get their eyes checked YEARLY.

How Is Diabetic Retinopathy Treated?

Treatment will depend on what the ophthalmologist (eye specialist doctor) finds in your eyes.

Treatment options may include:

- **Laser treatment** - a special beam of light treats the damaged blood vessels inside the eye
- **Eye injection** - medication is given by injection into the eye to slow the leaking of fluid from blood vessels
- **Eye surgery** - vitreous gel and blood removed from your eye so light can focus on the retina again