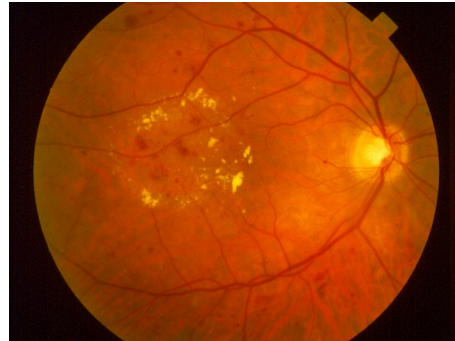


## Diabetic Retinopathy

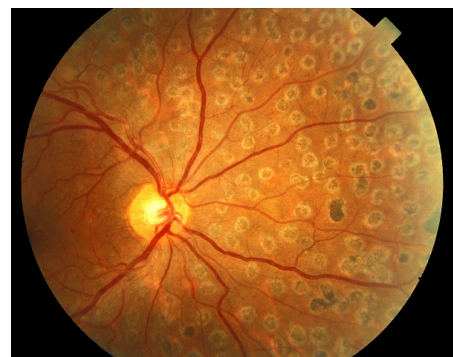
Diabetes interferes with the body's ability to use and store sugar. Over time, it can weaken and cause changes in the small blood vessels that nourish the retina at the back of the eye. This is called diabetic retinopathy. These changes may include leaking of blood, development of brush-like branches of the vessels, and enlargement of certain portions of these vessels. Diabetic retinopathy can seriously affect vision, and if left untreated, cause blindness. Because this disease can cause blindness, early diagnosis and treatment are essential, history of diabetes, we recommend having your eyes examined at least annually.



To detect diabetic retinopathy, we look inside your eyes with an ophthalmoscope, which lights and magnifies the retinal blood vessels in your eyes. The interior of your eyes may also be photographed to provide more information. The beginning stages of diabetic retinopathy may cause blurriness in your central or peripheral (side) vision, or they may produce no visual symptoms at all. It mainly depends on where the blood vessel changes are taking place in your eye's retina.

As diabetic retinopathy progresses you might notice vision cloudiness, blind spots, or floaters, which are usually caused by blood leaking from abnormal new vessels that block light from reaching the retina. In the advanced stages, connective scar tissue forms in association with new blood vessel growth, causing more distortion and blurriness. Over time, this tissue can shrink and detach the retina by pulling it toward the center of the eye.

Once diabetic retinopathy has been diagnosed, laser and other surgical treatments can be used to reduce the progression of this disease and decrease the risk of vision loss. If you have vision loss from diabetic retinopathy, we may prescribe special vision aids to help you see better—including telescopic lenses for distance vision, microscopic lenses, magnifying glasses, and electronic magnifiers for close work.



Not every diabetic patient develops retinopathy, but the chances of getting it increase after having diabetes for several years. Pregnancy, high blood pressure, and smoking may cause diabetic eye disease to develop or worsen. As a diabetic or a person at risk for diabetes, you should take steps to help prevent the development of diabetic retinopathy, including the following:

Take your prescribed medication as instructed.

Follow a proper diet.

Exercise regularly.

Have your eyes examined regularly.

By following these recommendations, chances are good that you can enjoy a lifetime of good vision and health.