

# Diabetic Eye Disease

## WHAT IS DIABETIC EYE DISEASE?

The term diabetic eye disease is used to describe common eye diseases associated with diabetes mellitus and high blood glucose levels. This may include diabetic retinopathy, diabetic macula oedema, cataracts, and glaucoma.

## WHO IS AT RISK OF DIABETIC EYE DISEASE?

Anyone with diabetes mellitus or gestational diabetes could be at risk of developing diabetic eye disease.

Those at a higher risk include people with high, fluctuating, and uncontrolled blood sugar levels as well as patients that have been diabetic for over 10 years.

Type I diabetics are at a higher risk also.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF DIABETIC EYE DISEASE?

Diabetic eye conditions may often have no symptoms meaning you may not know you have diabetic eye disease unless you attend your regular eye examinations.

By the time symptoms arise the condition is usually quite advanced and requires urgent treatment.

Signs and symptoms may include:

- Blurred or smudged vision
- Fluctuating vision
- Flashes of light in vision
- Floating spots or lines in vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Double vision
- Frequent changes in glasses prescription

## WHAT IS DIABETIC RETINOPATHY?

Diabetic retinopathy occurs when high blood sugar levels damage the walls of the blood vessels that run in the retinal layer at the back of the eye. The retinal blood vessels become leaky and leak blood and other components into the retina.

This happens in approximately 15% of people with diabetes and can result in blurred vision or even blindness.



Gulf & Ranges  
Optometrists

Phone: 8642 2766  
Email: [reception@gulfandranges.com.au](mailto:reception@gulfandranges.com.au)  
Website: [gulfandranges.com.au](http://gulfandranges.com.au)

## HOW IS DIABETIC RETINOPATHY TREATED?

Not all diabetic retinopathy needs treatment.

Mild non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy, with no effect on vision, usually just requires frequent monitoring by your optometrist or ophthalmologist.

When diabetic retinopathy causes swelling or bleeding at your macula this causes blurred central vision. This usually requires urgent treatment to save the sight. Treatment may involve regular injections of medication into the eye, laser eye treatment or eye surgery.

In all cases of treatment, anaesthetic eye drops are used to numb your eye, so the treatment is not felt.

## CAN I PREVENT DIABETIC EYE DISEASE?

Yes, you can significantly reduce your risk of diabetic eye disease by maintaining controlled blood sugar levels (below 6mmol/L).

Having regular eye examinations with your optometrist and regular blood tests with your GP or diabetic educator will help keep your risk down.

Diabetic eye disease is also more frequent in people who have high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smokers so making sure your blood pressure and cholesterol levels are normal and quitting smoking will help.



Phone: 8642 2766  
Email: [reception@gulfandranges.com.au](mailto:reception@gulfandranges.com.au)  
Website: [gulfandranges.com.au](http://gulfandranges.com.au)