

Diabetic Retinopathy

What is diabetic retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy (DR) is eye damage caused by long-term high blood sugar levels. The walls of the blood vessels in the retina weaken and leak blood. This causes swelling and vision problems. DR can lead to blindness.

What increases my risk for DR?

- Having diabetes for more than 5 years
- Poor blood sugar control
- High blood pressure, high cholesterol, pregnancy, or kidney disease
- Smoking
- Eye surgery or other eye problems
- Family members with DR

What are the signs and symptoms of DR?

- Blurred vision
- Seeing red or black wavy lines that look like a curtain or spider web
- Seeing light flashes or red, black, or grey floating spots (floaters)
- Vision loss

How is DR diagnosed?

- Dilated indirect ophthalmoscopy
- Fluorescein angiography
- Fundus photography

How is DR treated?

- **Laser treatment** may slow DR and prevent blindness. This treatment shrinks the new blood vessels and seals the areas that have leaks.
- **Anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (anti-VEGF)** treatment helps reduce swelling and improves vision. During this treatment, medicine is injected into the vitreous of the eye. The vitreous is the gel-like material that fills the inside of the eye.
- **Vitrectomy** is surgery for severe DR. A vitrectomy may be needed if there is bleeding in the vitreous that does not clear.

How to prevent or control DR?

- **Control blood sugar.**
- **Get eyes checked at least 1 time each year.**
- **Check blood pressure as directed.**
- **Exercise regularly.**
- **Do not smoke.** Nicotine can damage blood vessels in your eyes and make it more difficult to manage diabetes.

Reference: Micromedex's Care Notes System Online 2.0

