

# EYE HEALTH

Diabetes increases your risk of eye problems that can one day lead to blindness. The most common complication is diabetic retinopathy.

Diabetic retinopathy happens when the blood vessels in the retina are damaged. Damage can occur when your blood sugar is high on a regular basis. When your blood sugar is high, your blood becomes thick. Thick blood cannot flow into small blood vessels, such as those in the retina. Without proper blood flow, the retina becomes damaged.

## Symptoms of diabetic retinopathy include:

- Spots or floaters
- Blurred vision
- Dark or empty areas in your vision
- Vision loss

**WARNING:** Damage to the retina can happen before you even notice any changes in your vision. It is important to have your eyes checked by an eye specialist at least once a year.

Early detection can reduce long-term complications from diabetic retinopathy by slowing down the progression of the disease. Make sure to tell your eye specialist if you have diabetes so they know to look for any signs of diabetic retinopathy.

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Besides diabetic eye exams, here are other steps you can take to lower your risk of eye complications:

- Work to keep blood sugar levels under control
- Work to lower high blood pressure
- If you smoke, QUIT
- See your eye doctor right away if you experience:
  - ✓ Blurry vision
  - ✓ Trouble reading
  - ✓ Seeing double
  - ✓ Pain in one eye or both
  - ✓ Pressure in your eyes
  - ✓ Seeing spots or floaters

Need help finding an eye specialist or scheduling an appointment? Call MeridianComplete at **1-855-580-1689** (TTY users should call **711**), **Monday – Sunday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.** Visit **[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)** to learn more about diabetic eye health.

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MeridianComplete is a health plan that contracts with both Medicare and Illinois Medicaid to provide benefits of both programs to enrollees.

**ATTENTION:** If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call **1-855-580-1689** (TTY: **711**).

**ATENCIÓN:** si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al **1-855-580-1689** (TTY: **711**).