

# Background Diabetic Retinopathy

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This material will help you understand background diabetic retinopathy, its causes, and how you can control it.

## **What is background diabetic retinopathy?**

Background diabetic retinopathy, also known as non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy (NPDR), is the early stage of diabetic retinopathy. This occurs when diabetes damages the small blood vessels and nerves in the retina. The retina acts like the film of the eye. It captures images coming through the front of the eye and sends them to the brain to see. Fluids leaking from the damaged vessels cause the retina to swell. Swelling of the macula, the central area of the retina, can lead to vision loss. If not treated, it may lead to proliferative diabetic retinopathy (PDR). PDR is a more serious condition that can cause long term vision loss.

## **Who is at risk of background diabetic retinopathy?**

People with Type 1 or Type 2 Diabetes are at risk of developing diabetic retinopathy. The longer a person has diabetes, the higher chance s/he has of getting the disease. Pregnant women, especially those who have gestational diabetes, also face a higher risk. High blood pressure and high cholesterol may worsen diabetic retinopathy as well.

Most people with background diabetic retinopathy do not notice any symptoms or changes in their vision until later stages of the disease. It is hard to know if your diabetes has caused damage to the retina until your eye doctor finds signs during your regular eye exam.

## **How is background diabetic retinopathy treated?**

In this early stage of diabetic retinopathy, you may need no other treatment. It is important to have regular checkups by your eye doctor. You will also need to control your blood sugar and blood pressure through diet and exercise.

These are important steps to help prevent or slow the progress of background diabetic retinopathy into a more serious condition.

**For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.**



<http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/diabetic.retinopathy.html>



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/diabetic-retinopathy/index.cfm>

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