

# Diabetic Macular Edema

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This material will help you understand diabetic macular edema, its causes, and the different treatment options for this condition.

## **What is diabetic macular edema?**

Diabetic macular edema occurs when the macula swells or thickens. The macula is in the center of the retina and is responsible for your most precise vision. It allows you to read small print and thread needles. The retina acts like the film of the eye. It captures images coming in from the front of the eye and sends them to the brain to see. When the macula is swollen, it does not work properly. This may result in vision loss. For people with diabetes, macular edema is the most common cause of vision loss.

## **What causes diabetic macular edema?**

Prolonged diabetes can damage the tiny blood vessels in the retina that nourish the eye. (This is known as **diabetic retinopathy**.) These damaged blood vessels may leak blood or other fluid into the eye. This leaking fluid can cause the macula to swell, leading to macular edema.

## **How is macular edema treated?**

Control of your blood sugar and blood pressure is a key part of treating macular edema and preventing long term vision loss. Your doctor may also recommend a medical treatment option. These options include laser surgery or injections of medication into the eye.

- **Laser Surgery:** In this treatment your eye doctor focuses tiny laser pulses on areas near the macula where fluid is leaking. This seals the vessels that are leaking and causing the macula to swell. You may need more than one laser treatment over time to seal all the leaking vessels. The main goal of laser surgery is to prevent more vision loss.
- **Anti-VEGF (anti-vascular endothelial growth factor) Therapy:** Your eye doctor injects these drugs into the eye. It can shut down the leaky blood vessels and stop the growth of abnormal blood vessels that break easily. This will slow the amount of leakage in the macula and can help prevent vision loss. These injections may need to be repeated.

You and your doctor will discuss the treatment plan that is best for you, and s/he will answer any questions that you may have.

**For more information, scan this code with your smartphone or visit the website listed.**



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/macular-edema.cfm>

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