



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Tips on controlling your diabetic retinopathy and preventing sight loss

Information for patients

This leaflet is designed to arm you with the information you will need to optimise the treatment you are taking, manage your diabetes effectively and to ensure that you and your eyes remain healthy in the years to come. It should be used in addition to your regular GP / Diabetic team appointments as well as the Diabetic Eye Screening Programme.

Diabetes can have serious long-term effects on your eyes and can lead to permanent visual loss. The physical changes which occur are complex; however, there are several simple things which YOU can do to stop or limit the damage caused to your eyes and save your vision.

Useful terms:

Retina: The light sensing layer at the back of the eye

Macula: The central part of the retina which is responsible for the most detailed part of vision

Retinopathy: Retinopathy is the name given to 'disease of the retina' due to diabetes

Tip 1: Be responsible for your lifestyle

- Exercise for 30-120 minutes per day – of course not everyone can run a marathon, but whatever your ability, something is better than nothing. If in doubt, ask your GP or practice nurse for advice.
- Moderate alcohol consumption – drinking more than 2-3 units per day (1 large glass of wine / 1 pint of standard beer) can cause a rise in your blood pressure, which will increase your risks of damage to the eyes.
- Avoid obesity – this tends to lead to high blood pressure, raised cholesterol and tends to make exercise more difficult.
- Balanced diet – aim for at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day. These will help keep your cholesterol and overall weight down. (Be aware – fruit can have a high sugar content.)



Tip 2: Be Blood Pressure Aware

- High blood pressure speeds up the damage caused to your eyes.
- Blood pressure is measured as one number over another – e.g. 130/80.
- To minimise the chance of damage to the eyes, a diabetic person should keep their blood pressure below 130/80 and know what their last reading was.
- Your doctor may prescribe some medications to take to help achieve this but *you* can do your part by following the tips in this leaflet.



Tip 3: Keep track of your diabetes

- Diabetes is monitored either by regular finger-prick tests or by blood tests every few months.
- The finger prick tests give us a “snapshot” look at your blood sugar and this can vary depending on when you’ve eaten etc.
- The blood test measures something called – HbA1c. This gives us an impression of your “average” blood sugar control over months and is very useful in monitoring diabetic damage to the eyes.
- Ideally, the HbA1c should be less than 7% to minimise the chance of damage to the eyes.

- It is important to know what your latest readings are so that your doctors can judge how the treatment is going.

Tip 4: “Know Your Number” - Cholesterol

- Cholesterol is one of the types of fat in our blood.
- Too much fat in the blood can increase your chance of damage to your organs, including the eyes.
- Diabetic patients are especially at risk of developing these problems.
- It is therefore important to do whatever you can to lower these levels.
- As with blood pressure, your doctor may prescribe you medication to help keep your cholesterol level down, but you must do your part in cutting down on your “fatty food” intake.
- People with diabetes should keep their cholesterol level below 4.
- Your GP will be able to offer you advice on altering your diet to help you achieve your goal.

Tip 5: No better time to quit

- The single best thing you can do for your health is to stop smoking as soon as possible.
- Smoking doubles the damage done to your body, in general, by diabetes over time.
- With regards to your eyes, smoking can TRIPLE the speed at which your eyes are damaged.
- For every daily cigarette the speed of eye damage is increased by 15%.
- Passive smoking can DOUBLE the risk of eye damage.
- Having read these facts, visit your GP or practice nurse to discuss the various methods to help you “kick the habit”. You may regret it if you don’t act today!



Having read this leaflet you are now equipped with the basics to successfully manage your condition.

The final thing you must do is record your information and bring this with you to your appointments.

My diabetes:

Date									
HbA1c									
BP									
Cholesterol									
Triglycerides									
Weight (kg)									
BMI									



Write down any questions here regarding your diabetes or eye condition (it's all too easy to forget them at the time!) and ask your doctor at your next appointment.

Contacting us

If you have got a minor eye problem, please seek advice from your GP, optician or pharmacist. If you think your problem might be urgent, please attend Eye Casualty.

Eye Casualty (Reading):	Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm; Sat & Sun & bank holidays 9am-12.30pm; Closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day
Eye Casualty: Prince Charles Eye Unit (Windsor):	Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm; Sat 9am-12.30pm; Closed Sun & bank holidays
Dorrell Ward (Reading):	0118 322 7172 (24 hours a day)
Eye Day Unit (Reading):	0118 322 7123 (Mon-Fri 7am to 6pm)

Visit the Trust website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Dr B J Coakley GPVTS

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