

# 6 ways to keep your vision clear!

If you have diabetes, you know that high blood sugar can affect your entire body, including your eyes. In fact, diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control. In addition to aiming for your target A1C, minimizing blood sugar spikes and dips, and getting regular exams, try these strategies:



## 1. Stub out cigarettes.

In addition to making it more difficult to control blood sugar, research shows that smokers have double the risk of developing cataracts than non-smokers, and heavy smokers (15 cigarettes/day or more) have three times the risk! If you smoke and are having trouble quitting, ask your doctor about smoking cessation treatments.



## 2. Slash stress.

Anxious jitters do more than just frazzle your nerves; stress can also raise blood sugar and blood pressure, both of which can damage blood vessels in the eye. In fact, a recent study in the *European Association for Predictive, Preventive and Personalised Medicine Journal* found that persistent stress may be linked with glaucoma. So whenever you feel overwhelmed, turn to your favorite soothing technique.



## 3. Sport shades.

People with diabetes are at greater risk for cataracts because consistently high blood sugar causes blood vessels in the eyes to swell. Since direct exposure to UV light is another contributing factor, be sure to wear sunglasses every time you go outside, rain or shine. Choose a pair that blocks 100% UVA and UVB rays.



## 4. Deflate high blood pressure.

Untreated high blood pressure can lead to hypertensive retinopathy, in which blood vessels in the retina get damaged. Fortunately, getting it under control can help: In a recent study in *Diabetes Therapy*, people who got their blood sugar down to a normal level had a 17% reduced risk of diabetic retinopathy. Your healthcare provider may recommend adding a

medication to reduce blood pressure as well as increasing activity and eating a healthy diet.



## 5. Ramp up you heart rate.

Aerobic activities like walking, biking and dancing can help keep eyes healthy by reducing pressure on the nerves in the eye. Consider: One study by the University of Mississippi found inactive diabetes patients had a greater risk for severe diabetic retinopathy. Ask your doctor about a safe exercise program for you.



## 6. Get hooked on fatty fish.

Fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, halibut and sardines, may protect against diabetic retinopathy by preventing inflammation and abnormal blood vessel growth in the eyes. A study in *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that middle aged and older adults with type 2 diabetes who consumed 500 mg a day of omega-3s (two servings a week of fatty fish) had a 48% lower risk of diabetic retinopathy than those who didn't.

### The best protection? Regular eye exams!

Often, symptoms don't appear until a disease has progressed. Having regular eye exams is the best way to catch eye disease early.

## Top 4 sight stealers—and how to spot them

### 1. DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

**What it is:** Blood vessels in the retina swell and leak, distorting vision. In some cases, abnormal blood vessels grow on the surface of the retina, resulting in scar tissue.

**Warning signs:** Blurry vision, difficulty seeing at night, dark or empty areas in vision, spots or floaters.

### 2. DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA

**What it is:** As a complication of diabetic retinopathy, fluid buildup in the retina causes the macula to swell and thicken, distorting vision.

**Warning signs:** Blurry vision, colors seem faded, double vision, floaters.

### 3. CATARACTS

**What it is:** The lens of your eye grows cloudy, causing blurry vision.

**Warning signs:** Blurry vision, colors seem faded, or your vision has a brownish tint or is hazy.

### 4. GLAUCOMA

**What it is:** The most common form is primary open-angle glaucoma—a chronic condition, usually caused by high internal eye pressure, that damages the optic nerve.

**Warning signs:** Trouble with your peripheral (side) vision.