When you have diabetes, you may not notice changes in your vision, but you may still have a problem. This is because the longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to develop eye disease.

It’s important to find eye disease early

When eye disease is caught early, your healthcare provider may be able to treat it. That’s why it’s important to have a comprehensive eye exam. This type of exam checks your vision and tests for eye diseases.

If you have type 2 diabetes and signs of diabetic retinopathy, your healthcare provider may suggest getting a dilated eye exam at least once a year. If you have type 2 diabetes and no signs of retinopathy, your healthcare provider may suggest getting an exam every 2 years. If you have type 1 diabetes, you may have an exam within 5 years. Diabetic retinopathy is swelling of the tiny blood vessels in the retina (at the back of the eye). This swelling can get worse over time. Scar tissue may form and damage the retina. Blood may leak into the retina, causing loss of vision. There may be no signs of retinopathy until there is vision loss.

What is a comprehensive eye exam?

- It is a complete eye checkup done by an eye doctor. An optometrist (op-TOM-oh-trist) or an ophthalmologist (of-thal-MOL-oh-jist) can provide this exam.
- It is different from an eyeglass or contact lens exam and is much more thorough.
- It may include some of the tests listed in the chart below. They may help find eye diseases and damage caused by diabetes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of eye test</th>
<th>What happens during this test?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual acuity test</td>
<td>• You read an eye chart to measure how well you see at various distances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilated eye exam</td>
<td>• Drops are placed in your eyes to make your pupils bigger. Your eye doctor looks through a special lens to examine your retina and the small blood vessels at the back of your eye. The retina is in the back of your eye. It captures light rays (images) that enter the front of your eye and sends them to your brain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eye pressure test, called a tonometry (toe-NOM-uh-tree)</td>
<td>• Drops may be placed in your eyes to numb them. Your eye doctor uses a tool (tonometer) on the surface of your eyes. Some doctors direct a puff of air onto them. It measures the pressure inside your eyes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slit-lamp exam</td>
<td>• Your eye doctor uses a microscope called a slit lamp to shine light into your eye. He or she uses this light to examine different parts of your eyes. Drops of dye may be placed in your eyes to help the doctor see tiny cuts, scrapes, or signs of damage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Making your appointment

Life is busy. Going to the eye doctor may not be on your mind. But remember, when eye disease is caught early, your healthcare provider may be able to treat it. **Check with your healthcare provider about when you should make an appointment.**

If you are having problems making the appointment, these 6 steps can help. Remember, you do not have to do everything at once. Just take one step at a time. **Check off ☑ each item below after you have done it.**

Together with your eye doctor, you can help protect your sight.

The steps below can help you get the most from your appointment:

**STEP 1**
Some health plans may cover comprehensive eye exams for people with diabetes. Call your insurance provider to get the name of an eye doctor who can do the exam for you.

**Write your eye doctor’s name and telephone number here:**

**STEP 2**
Call your eye doctor. Write your appointment date and time here:

Date: ____________________________  Time: ____________________________

**STEP 3**
Prepare for your appointment. Be sure to bring a list of all the medicines you take. Bring sunglasses or dark glasses with you. If you can, make plans to have someone drive you home.

**STEP 4**
Go to your appointment. Your eye doctor will likely use eye drops to dilate your eyes. This may make your vision blurry and sensitive to light. It may help to wear sunglasses or dark glasses. Wait until your vision is clear if you are driving.

**STEP 5**
After your exam, ask the eye doctor to send the results to your healthcare provider. **Talk about the results at your next visit.**

**STEP 6**
Reward yourself for taking care of your eyes! Write down an activity you enjoy doing. Then, make plans to do it.

For more information about diabetes and your eyes, visit the American Diabetes Association website at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org). For more information call **1-800-DIABETES** (1-800-342-2383).