Diabetic eye screening

Your guide to the low-risk pathway



Northern Ireland
Diabetic Eye
Screening
Programme

HSC Public Health Agency

You have received this leaflet because your diabetic eye screening appointment has been moved to **once every two years**. This is because you are considered to be at low risk of developing diabetic eye disease (you are on the 'low-risk pathway'). This leaflet aims to answer frequently asked questions about this change to the programme.

What is the 'low-risk pathway' (LRP)?

This a new pathway for those who are at low risk of developing diabetic eye disease. Those who meet the eligibility criteria will be invited for diabetic eye screening every two years rather than every year as has happened up to now.

Why is this change happening?

A number of years ago the National Screening Committee recommended that those at low risk of sight loss could be safely moved to having screening every two years instead of every year. This already happens in Scotland and will be happening across the other UK nations over the next few years.

Why is this happening now?

The Northern Ireland Diabetic Eye Screening Programme had planned to introduce the Low-Risk Pathway in March 2020, however the COVID-19 pandemic meant that we had to prioritise keeping the service going. We are now in a better position to bring this change in.

Is this because of cost saving?

No, this change was planned before the pandemic, and the recommendation was made by the National Screening Committee in 2016. Whilst the introduction of the LRP will reduce the number of people we need to see every year by a small amount, because of the number of people being newly diagnosed with diabetes every year, we will soon be back to inviting the same number of people as before.

Who is eligible?

Those participants who have had no changes detected at their previous two routine screening appointments will be automatically moved to the LRP. There are some other criteria that need to be met in order to safely move people to this pathway, such as not being pregnant and being part of the routine eye screening pathway.

What does this mean for me?

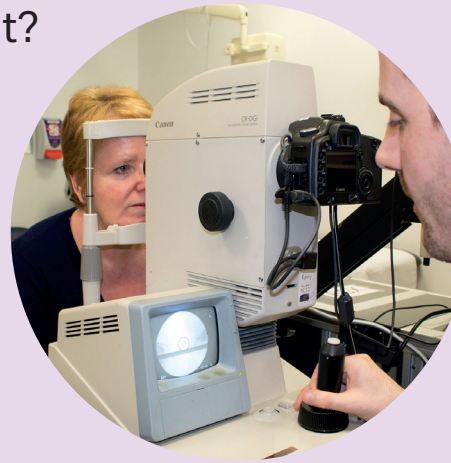
This means that, provided you continue to have no changes in your eyes detected at your appointment, you will continue to be called every two years.

What happens if I don't attend my appointment?

If you do not attend (DNA) your screening appointment, you will be moved back to annual screening. This is to ensure that there is not too long a gap between your screening appointments.

What happens if I am pregnant?

Those who are pregnant are not eligible for the LRP because you need to be screened more often during pregnancy as your risk level increases when you are pregnant.



What if I develop eye disease between screens?

The risk of developing diabetic eye disease is very low for those who are screened every two years. In the unlikely event that diabetic eye disease does develop in the two years between screens, it is likely to be at an early stage of disease that is more easily treated.

What should I do if I have any concerns about my eyes between screening appointments?

Do not wait for your next screening appointment. Get advice from your GP or optometrist.

What happens at my appointment?

Your appointment will be no different than your previous routine screening appointments. The same process will take place with the same type of equipment.

Will I always be called every two years?

You will continue to be screened every two years provided no changes are detected in either of your eyes. If even mild changes are detected you will no longer be on the LRP. If you do not attend a low risk appointment, you will be called again in one year from then to try to reduce the gap between screening appointments.

Where can I get further information?

Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (also known as Diabetic Retinopathy Screening)
www.publichealth.hscni.net/desp

HSC Public Health Agency

Northern Ireland Diabetic Eye Screening Programme

Public Health Agency
12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.
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www.publichealth.hscni.net

Find us on:

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