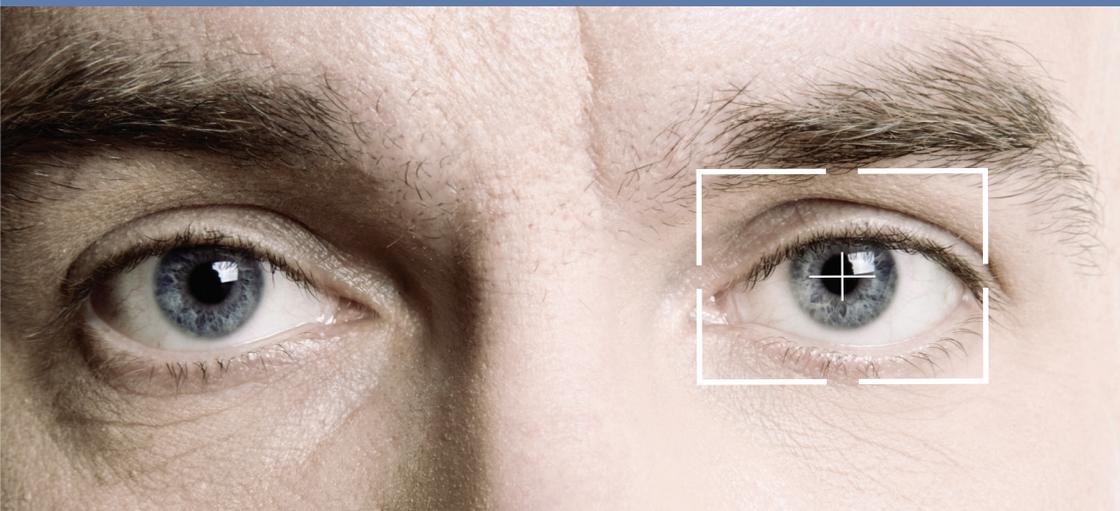


# Diabetic Eye Screening

An introduction



Northern Ireland

**Diabetic Eye  
Screening**

Programme

# Your guide to **diabetic eye** screening

## **Why should I be screened?**

Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps prevent sight loss. Because you have diabetes, you are at risk of an eye condition called diabetic retinopathy. Screening can detect this early, before you notice any changes to your vision.

## **What is diabetic retinopathy?**

This condition occurs when diabetes causes damage to small blood vessels in the back part of the eye called the retina. These vessels can then leak blood into the retina or become blocked. This can affect your sight.



## Why is screening important?

Eye screening is a key part of your diabetes care. Untreated diabetic retinopathy is one of the most common causes of sight loss. When the condition is detected early, treatment is effective at reducing or preventing damage to your sight.

Remember, diabetic eye screening is not covered as part of your normal eye examination with an optician. Screening does not look for other eye conditions and you should continue to visit your optician regularly for eye examinations.

## What happens during screening?

- If you are aged 50 years or over, we put drops in your eyes to temporarily make your pupils larger. You may find the drops sting your eyes a little.
- We take photographs of the back of your eyes. The camera does not come into contact with your eyes.
- We send the photographs to an expert who reviews the images.
- The screening appointment lasts approximately 15–30 minutes.
- We send a letter to you, and copy it to your GP, within three weeks informing you of your screening results.



## How often will I be invited for screening?

Screening is offered every year to anyone aged 12 years and over with diabetes.

## Are there any side effects?

The eye drops may affect your vision for a few hours, so you should not drive or operate machinery after your appointment until your vision has returned to normal.

## What can screening tell us?

The photographs of your eyes are studied after you are screened. They can tell us:

- if you have early signs of retinopathy or maculopathy
- if you need a follow-up appointment to decide if you need treatment
- if you need to have more frequent checks.

Sometimes we may need to call you back for more photographs if the original ones are not clear.

## What do I need to remember on the day?

- **Bring all your glasses and contact lenses along with lens solution for the contacts.**
- Bring sunglasses as your eyes can feel sensitive after the eye drops.
- Eye drops may affect your vision for a few hours, so you should not drive home after the appointment.
- You may want to bring someone with you to the appointment.



**Remember: eye screening is just one part of managing your diabetes and diabetic retinopathy is treatable, especially if caught early.**



## You can help reduce your risk of diabetic retinopathy by:

- attending your diabetic eye screening appointments
- getting advice if you have a problem with your sight
- controlling your blood glucose as effectively as possible
- seeing your doctor regularly to check your blood pressure is not raised
- taking your medication as prescribed.

**Smoking is particularly damaging to eye health.  
For advice and support or to find your local stop  
smoking service, visit [www.want2stop.info](http://www.want2stop.info)**



## How can I find out more?

For more information:

- call the DESP screening programme office on 028 9063 9599
- visit the website: **[www.publichealth.hscni.net/desp](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/desp)**
- contact your GP.



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