How to Protect Your Eyes

- Have a complete eye exam with dilated pupils at least once a year, even if you see well now.
- Keep your blood sugar normal. If you have been given pills or insulin for your diabetes, make sure you take them regularly. Check your blood sugar. Record the results so you can discuss them with your doctor or health care provider.
- Have your blood pressure checked often. If you have been prescribed blood pressure pills, make sure you take them even if you feel fine. High blood pressure can quickly make eye problems worse.
- Call your eye doctor at once if you have blurred vision, double vision, dark spots, trouble seeing at night, or pain or pressure in your eyes.

Protect your eyes!
Have a complete eye exam once a year.

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Diabetes Prevention and Control Program
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To order copies of this brochure, go to: www.maclearinghouse.com
or call 1-800-952-6637.

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What is Diabetic Retinopathy?

The retina is the coating inside the back of your eye that reacts to light so you can see. Many small blood vessels criss-cross your retina. Over time, high blood sugar and high blood pressure can weaken these vessels, making them leak or bleed. Since you need the retina to see, this bleeding (called retinopathy) may lead to blurred vision and blindness.

Facts about Diabetes and Eye Disease

- Diabetes can damage your eyes.
- Most people who have had diabetes for more than 10 years have some eye damage.
- Finding and treating eye problems early can help prevent blindness.
- Having a complete eye exam once a year is important. It might save your sight!

What is Diabetic Eye Disease?

Diabetic eye disease is a group of problems that may happen to a person who has diabetes. Diabetic eye disease can cause loss of vision and sometimes blindness.

Diabetic Eye Diseases

- **Cataract**: the lens of the eye becomes cloudy.
- **Glaucoma**: the pressure inside the eye rises and damages the optic nerve.

Cataracts and glaucoma can affect people without diabetes, too.

- **Retinopathy**: the blood vessels in the back of the eye become weak and bleed and cause damage to the retina.

Test Yourself

1. A person with diabetes should have an eye exam at least once a year.
   - True  False
2. People with diabetes are more likely than other people to get eye disease.
   - True  False
3. Diabetic eye disease can be treated.
   - True  False
4. Diabetic eye disease almost never has early warning signs.
   - True  False
5. Laser surgery helps control diabetic retinopathy.
   - True  False

All answers are true.

What is the Treatment for Diabetic Retinopathy?

A laser beam can be used to repair damaged blood vessels and may help to prevent blindness. Laser surgery may bring back some vision already lost, and will most likely keep the retinopathy from getting worse.