

# Diabetic Retinopathy

## What is diabetic retinopathy?

- **Diabetic retinopathy** is when diabetes harms the blood vessels that are inside the eye.

## What causes diabetic retinopathy?

- Diabetic retinopathy is caused by **diabetes**. Diabetes weakens the blood vessels all over the body. This includes the blood vessels in the eyes.

Some things that can make it worse are:

- Poor blood sugar control
- High cholesterol (fat in the blood)
- High blood pressure
- Smoking

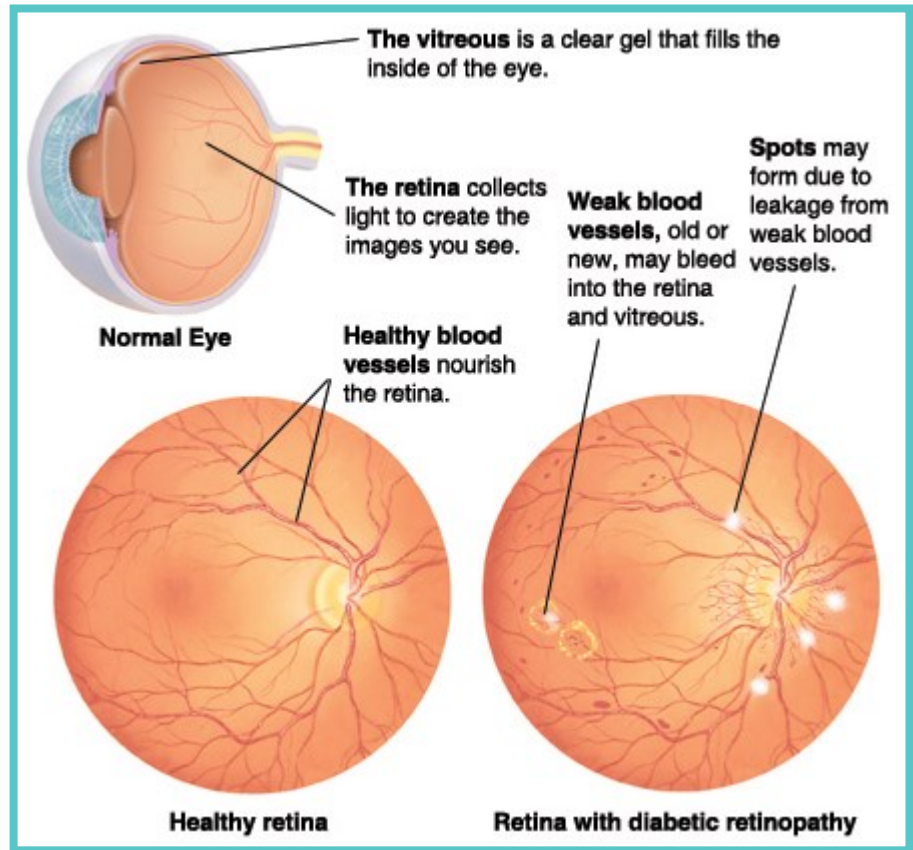


Image from Krames

## What are the signs of diabetic retinopathy?

- You may have diabetic retinopathy without even knowing. **There are no early signs.**
- You may start to have blurry eyesight or see spots or floaters. You may also have trouble seeing at night. You may notice some loss of your eyesight.
- **If left untreated, diabetic retinopathy can cause blindness.**

## Who is at risk?

- **Anyone who has diabetes (Type 1 and Type 2)** is at risk.

## How can I lower my risk?

- If you have diabetes, it is recommended that you have an eye exam when you are diagnosed. **You should get eye exams yearly.** This will lower your risk of losing your eyesight.
- Keeping your diabetes under control will also help prevent harm to your eyes.

## What is a diabetic retinal exam?

- For a the exam, your doctor will take a picture of the retina using a special camera. You most likely will not need to have your eyes dilated for this exam.
- Your doctor will send the picture to an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) for review. The exam is quick, easy, and painless.



Image from WelchAllyn.com

## Who can get a diabetic retinal exam?

Most diabetic patients can get a diabetic retinal exam. However, **it may be harder to get a clear image if you:**

- Have cataracts
- Have had eye surgery

If you suffer from blindness or wear contact lenses, you can still have the retinal eye exam. If you wear colored contact lenses, you will need to take them out before you get the exam.

## What happens if I have diabetic retinopathy?

- If the exam shows that you have diabetic retinopathy, you may need to see an eye specialist.

**Talk to your CHN doctor if you have more questions!**