



Focus on Diabetic Retinopathy

It is important for African Americans to maintain healthy vision because they are at higher risk for certain eye diseases that, if left untreated, can cause vision loss, even blindness. The good news is that vision loss can often be prevented.

This fact sheet contains information about a common eye disease – diabetic retinopathy – including the causes, symptoms, and what you can do to focus on your vision.

DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

Approximately 828,000 African Americans have diabetic retinopathy, and this number is expected to exceed 1 million by 2030. Less than half of African Americans have heard of diabetic retinopathy.

What is it?

- Diabetic retinopathy occurs when the blood vessels in the eye are damaged by diabetes.

What causes it?

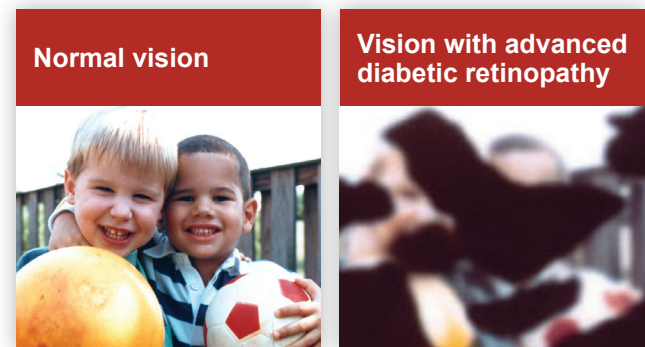
- It is caused when blood vessels inside the eye swell and leak fluid or when new, abnormal blood vessels grow within the eye.

What are the symptoms?

- There are usually no symptoms or pain in the early stages.

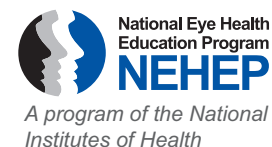
How can you focus on your vision?

- People with diabetes should keep their diabetes under control and get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.
- Don't wait for symptoms to see an eye care professional.



Write
the Vision

Make your plan to protect your sight.



HEALTHY VISION

Now that you know more about diabetic retinopathy and how to help prevent vision loss, here are some lifestyle tips to help you focus on your vision:

- Control your diabetes if you have it.
- Don't wait for problems with your eyes. Make comprehensive dilated eye exams part of your health routine.
- Know your family's eye health history. If eye disease runs in your family, you may be at higher risk.
- Eat a nutritious diet that includes leafy green veggies and fish, such as salmon, tuna, and halibut.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Quit smoking or never start.
- Protect your eyes when playing sports or doing yard work.

For more information on diabetic retinopathy and tips on protecting your vision, visit:

www.nei.nih.gov/diabetes



National Eye Institute



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