

Eye disease (Diabetic retinopathy)

The retina is the back part of the eye that contains cells that respond to light. The retina is nourished by many small blood vessels. Chronically high blood sugar levels over time can weaken these blood vessels leading to leaking or swelling which can damage the retina and ultimately lead to serious vision problems. These changes in the retina are painless and initially do not affect vision. If they go undetected and untreated, they can lead to serious visual problems.

While we rarely see retinopathy in children with diabetes, it is important to get a dilated eye exam (the pupil is dilated so the retina at the back of the eye can be seen) by an eye professional on a regular basis. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends the first eye exam is done when a child is 10 years or older **AND** has had diabetes for 3-5 years. After this initial exam, follow up visits can be annually or less frequently based on the advice of your eye care professional and diabetes team. If significant retinopathy develops, in most cases it can be treated by photocoagulation (laser) treatment of affected blood vessels before vision is permanently affected.

Remember, Prevention and tight BG control are the Best Treatment!