



# Eye problems in women with diabetes



[nhs.uk/diabeticeye](https://nhs.uk/diabeticeye)

## What is the test for?

To check for signs of diabetic retinopathy and other eye problems caused by diabetes and monitor the health of your eyes if you are pregnant and have type 1 or type 2 diabetes. You will not need diabetic eye screening if you did not have diabetes before pregnancy.

## About this condition

Diabetic retinopathy is caused when diabetes affects the small blood vessels in the retina at the back of the eye.

Everyone with diabetes is offered eye screening but screening is very important when you are pregnant because the risk of serious eye problems is greater.

## What does having the test involve?

You will be offered screening at, or soon after, your first antenatal clinic visit and also after 28 weeks of pregnancy. If early stages of retinopathy are found at the first screening, you will be offered another test between 16 and 20 weeks of pregnancy. If serious retinopathy is found at any screening, you will be referred to an eye specialist.

Screening will only be offered if you already had diabetes before you were pregnant

Retinal screening in pregnancy is the same as routine eye screening when you have diabetes.

Screening staff will record your details and level of sight. They will put drops in your eyes to make your pupils larger so the retinas can be seen more clearly and take digital photographs of your retinas.

If the images are not clear enough you will be referred to an eye specialist for a different test.

## Can this screening test harm me or my baby?

The photograph is painless and the camera does not come into contact with the eye. The eye drops may sting for a few seconds and cause blurred vision for 2-6 hours after the test. Take all your usual spectacles with you. Take sunglasses with you to wear home, as everything may look very bright after the screening test.



Diabetic retinopathy is treatable, especially if caught early





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Arrange to use public transport or get a lift for the journey home. **You should not drive after screening as the eye drops can blur vision.**

Very rarely, the drops can cause a sudden, dramatic rise in pressure within the eye. Symptoms of pressure rise include:

- pain or severe discomfort in the eye
- redness of the white of the eye
- constantly blurred sight.

If you experience any of these symptoms after screening, you should return to the eye unit or go to an Accident and Emergency department.

### Do I need this test?

This test is strongly recommended if you already had diabetes before getting pregnant.

Eye screening is a part of managing your diabetes and diabetic retinopathy is treatable, especially if it is caught early.

### What if I decide not to have this test?

People with diabetes can decide not to attend eye screening appointments.

If you decide not to have the test you should notify the clinician looking after your diabetes care during pregnancy.

### Possible results

If you have the screening test, possible results are:

- no retinopathy
- early signs of retinopathy
- more serious retinopathy that requires referral to a specialist.

If your test shows early signs of retinopathy, your health professional will give you advice about looking after your diabetes during pregnancy and you will be invited for additional screening tests during your pregnancy. If you are a smoker, seek help to stop or at least cut down.

If the test shows you have referable retinopathy you will receive an appointment with an eye specialist.

### Getting my results

A letter will be sent to you and your GP within 6 weeks following your screening appointment.