



## **DIABETES AND EYE PROBLEMS RETINOPATHY**

### **PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET**

#### **What is retinopathy?**

Retinopathy is a change in the small, delicate blood vessels in the back of the eye which, if undetected and untreated, can lead to loss of vision.

#### **How do I know if I have retinopathy?**

The only way to determine if retinopathy is present is by having a dilated eye exam by your ophthalmologist. This doctor, who specializes in disorders of the eye, can examine these blood vessels for any changes that may be caused by high blood glucose levels over time.

#### **What are common signs of retinopathy?**

Often, there are no changes in vision when retinopathy is present. Contact your doctor if:

- You have blurred vision that is not related to high blood glucose.
- You see dark spots or spider web-like lines.
- You see flashes of light or rings around lights.

#### **What can I do to reduce my risk of developing retinopathy?**

- Keep blood glucose well controlled. Discuss blood glucose goals with your physician.
- Keep blood pressure well controlled.
- **DO NOT SMOKE.** Nicotine causes the small blood vessels in the eye to constrict.



## How often should I have my eyes examined?

A yearly, dilated eye exam is recommended for all individuals with diabetes unless you experience changes in vision or your ophthalmologist recommends more frequent exams.

- Individuals 10 years of age or older with type 1 diabetes should have yearly exams beginning 3-5 years after diagnosis.
- Individuals with type 2 diabetes should be scheduled for an eye exam at the time diabetes is diagnosed.
- A woman with diabetes (type 1 or 2) who is planning a pregnancy or is already pregnant should have an eye exam.

## If my vision is blurry, does this mean I already have retinopathy?

Blurry vision does not necessarily mean that retinopathy is present. When the blood glucose level is high changes in vision are common. As good blood glucose control is achieved, the individual's true vision returns. It can take up to 6 to 8 weeks of "good control" for this to occur.

## Where can I learn more about diabetes?

If you have questions you may contact any of the following resources:

Organization	Phone
Greenwich Hospital Weight Loss & Diabetes Center	203.863.2939
Greenwich Hospital Diabetes Educator	203.863.3929
American Diabetes Association	800.232.3472
<b>Web Resources</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> American Diabetes Association: <a href="http://www.diabetes.org">www.diabetes.org</a>	

*For more Patient Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at [www.greenwichhospital.org](http://www.greenwichhospital.org) and click on Patient Education*