

Diabetic eye screening

An easy guide about a health check for people who have diabetes and are aged 12 or older



Contents: what is in this booklet

Page



Your choice

3



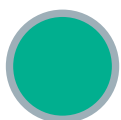
About the check

5



Results

8



More information

9



Your choice



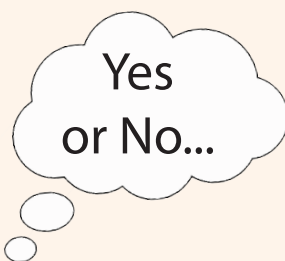
This booklet tells you about diabetic eye screening.

This is a free NHS test for people who have diabetes and are aged 12 and over.



People with diabetes have more chance of having problems with their eyes.

These eye problems can cause blindness if they are not treated.



Diabetic eye screening is important.

It checks if diabetic eye disease is damaging your sight.



It can find problems early so that they can be treated and to stop them getting worse.

You can choose if you want to have the check or not.



You can talk to someone you feel comfortable with about diabetic eye screening.

You can talk to your nurse, your carer, a relative, support worker or your doctor.

You can arrange a visit to your local service before the check.



About the check



We usually invite you for diabetic eye screening every 1 or 2 years. Some people may need to be screened more often than that.

Screening is different from your normal eye sight test for glasses.



We will send you a letter. This may have the date, time and place of your appointment or it may ask you to phone up to arrange a time and date.



Please tell the screening service if you need any extra help, or if you are in a wheelchair.

We can then make a longer appointment for you.



You can take a friend, carer or family member with you to your appointment.

The appointment should last about 30 to 40 minutes. We will explain the test and you can ask any questions that you have.



We will ask you to look at some charts that have letters or pictures on them.



You will need to have eye drops. The drops will help us to see your eyes.

The drops might make your eyes sting. This will not last long.



The eye drops might make things look very bright. You may want to bring a pair of sunglasses with you to wear afterwards.

Also bring any glasses that you normally wear.



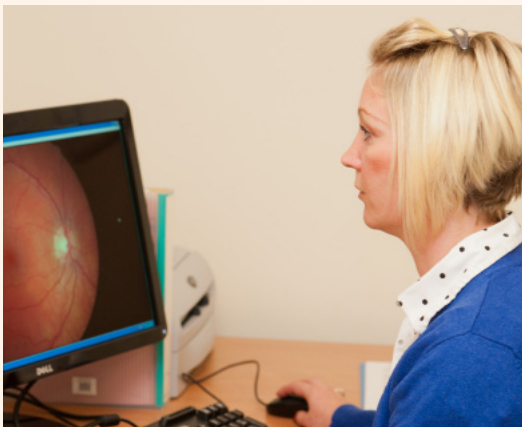
Your sight may be blurry after the check. You will not be able to drive home from your appointment, so you may want to bring someone with you to take you home.



We take photographs of the back of your eyes. The camera will not touch your eyes.

You will need to rest your chin and forehead on the machine and keep your head still. Someone may need to help you to keep your head still.

The check does not hurt.



We will look at photos of the back of your eyes to check for any signs of disease.



Results



We will send a letter to you and your GP within 3 weeks with your screening test results.



Most people do not have any signs of eye disease.

We will send you a letter when you need your next check.



Sometimes you will be asked to go back for another test.



We may ask you to see an eye doctor in the hospital.



More information



You can phone your local diabetic eye screening service using the number on the letter we sent you.

A carer, relative or friend can phone for you.

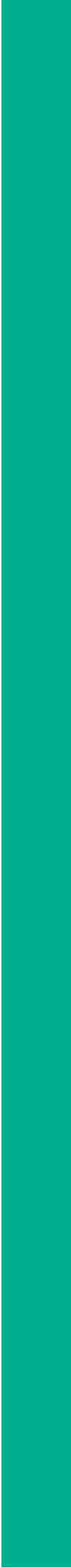


You can visit the NHS.UK website at www.nhs.uk/diabeticeye.



You can contact your local diabetic eye screening service. See www.nhs.uk/diabeticeye for their contact details.

You can also talk to your own doctor or diabetes nurse.



First published: September 2018

This version: September 2023

© NHS England 2025

Images courtesy of: Bill Newsinger - Photography (pages 4, 5 and 9); Photosymbols (pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9); Shutterstock by Robnroll (page 3)