




# Diabetic Retinopathy What You Should Know



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
National Institutes of Health  
National Eye Institute

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The National Eye Institute (NEI) conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatments and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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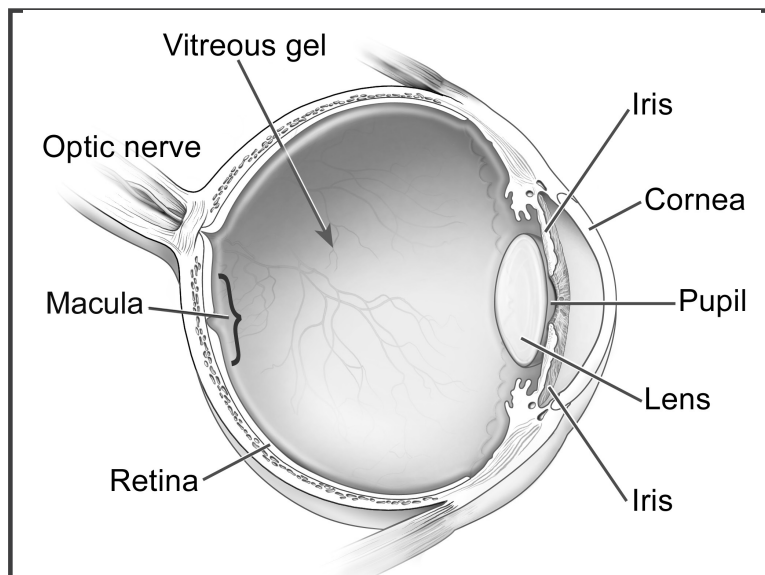
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## What is Diabetic Retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy is a complication of diabetes and the leading cause of vision impairment and blindness among working-age adults. It occurs when diabetes damages the tiny blood vessels in the retina, which is the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. Diabetic retinopathy may lead to diabetic macular edema (DME), which is a swelling in an area of the retina called the macula.



Diabetic retinopathy involves damage to the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye.

## What causes diabetic retinopathy?

Chronically high blood sugar from diabetes is associated with damage to the tiny blood vessels in the retina, leading to diabetic retinopathy. The retina detects light and converts it to signals sent through the optic nerve to the brain. Diabetic retinopathy can cause blood vessels in the retina to leak fluid

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