

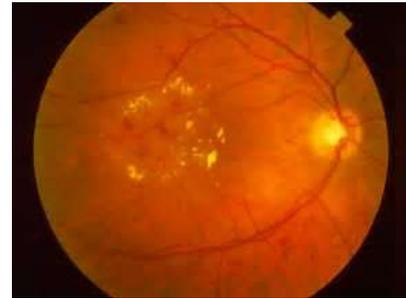
The Quick Summary

Your eyes are starting to show diabetes-related changes, so you are on the brink of needing eye injections. Make sure you keep working with your doctor to keep your a1c in check.

Diabetic Retinopathy

On Dr. Shalwala's exam, you have diabetic retinopathy. Diabetes starts affecting your eyes by causing little blood spots and changes to the old blood vessels in your retina, which is the "film" in the "camera" of your eye. After that, we worry about two major vision threatening issues.

1. Macular edema - When the old blood vessels in your eye get affected by diabetes, they can start to leak non-bloody fluid. This can lead to swelling (or "edema") of the retina. The center of the retina is called the macula. Since the retina is like the "film" in the "camera of the eye," a swollen retina is not a nice flat "film" for images to focus. This means that the vision will be blurry. Treatment of macular edema can involve injections and lasers.
2. Neovascularization - When diabetes hurts the old blood vessels in your eye enough, the delivery of oxygen to the retina is compromised, and the retina starts "calling out" for new blood vessels to deliver oxygen. New blood vessels are not good for the eye. The problem is that new blood vessels can distort the architecture of the retina, which can ruin retinal function. The new blood vessels can also bleed into the eye and fill the eyeball with blood, which cannot be seen through. Treatment of neovascularization can involve injections but almost always needs a laser for permanent treatment.



You don't have macular edema or neovascularization yet, which is a very good thing, because once those changes start, it can often be a spiral of worsening consequences that can be vision-threatening. The only places we can see these changes are your eyes, but these types of changes are likely present all over your body. This is a good time to re-assess your diabetes control and know that diabetes is having a real impact on your body. If your regular doctor thinks that you need to control your diabetes better, we agree because we can see it actively hurting your body. Do your best to meet your regular doctor's goals for you, because if things get worse, needing eye injections and lasers might be just the beginning of your health problems.

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