



How do I delay or **prevent** eye damage?

Getting your eyes screened every year, managing your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels, following a healthy diet, and quitting smoking are all changes that may help with eye care. Report any changes in your eyesight to your doctor immediately.

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DIABETES AND EYE CARE

An information leaflet prepared
by the Health Promotion and Disease
Prevention Directorate



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR HEALTH
AND ACTIVE AGEING



Diabetes and eye care

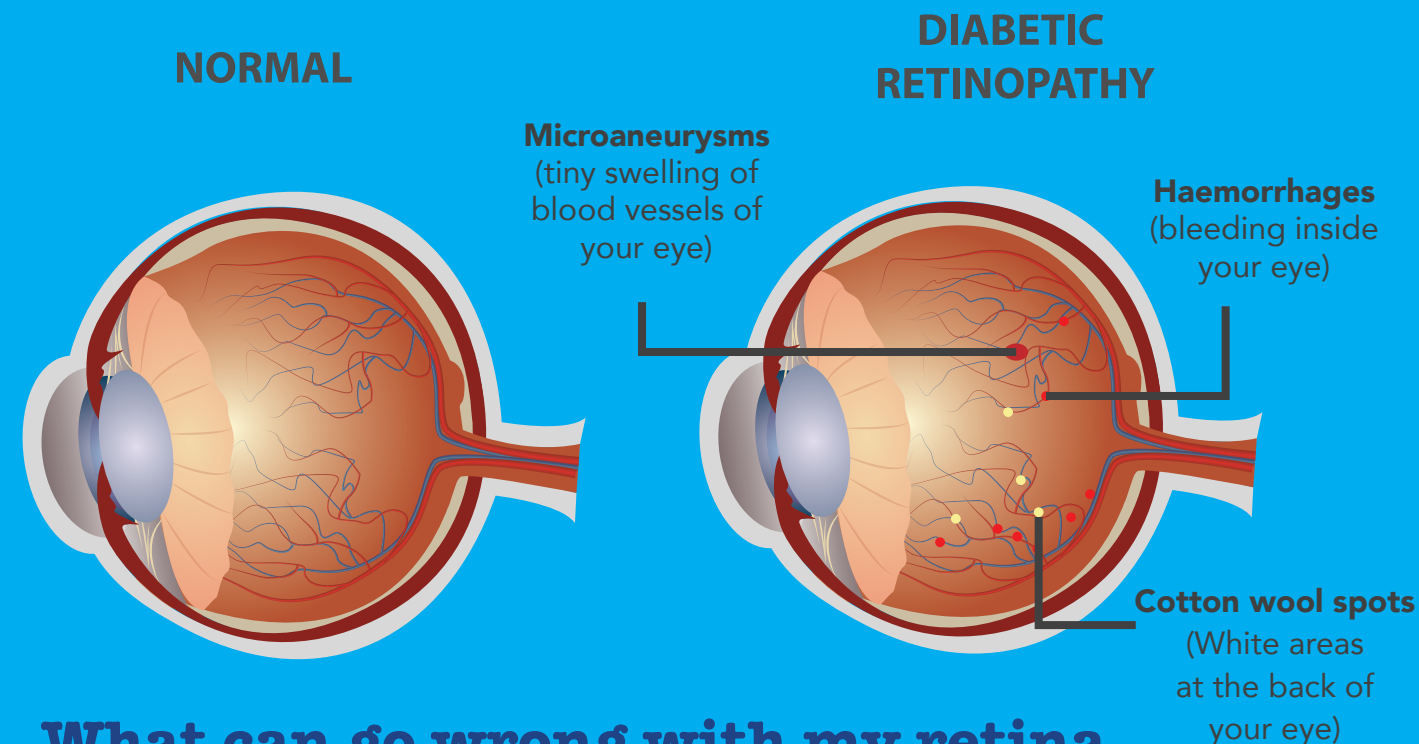
People who suffer from diabetes are at a higher risk of developing eye complications like **Diabetic Retinopathy, Macular Oedema, Cataracts and Glaucoma**. Unfortunately, many do not notice these changes in their vision until conditions are well advanced and, if left untreated, can lead to poor vision and eventually blindness. The good news is that with regular eye checks and early treatment, serious vision loss can be prevented.

How can diabetes affect my eyes?

Our eyeballs have a front and a back. The front of our eyes (the part we look out of) is called the 'lens' whereas the back is called the 'retina'. This is a light sensitive disc that picks up the picture that comes through your lens. The lens and the retina of your eyes work like a movie projector and a screen. The projector is like your lens, and the screen is like your retina.

If the lens the picture goes through (the movie projector) is wrongly focused or damaged, the picture on the screen will not be right. This problem can usually be fixed by refocusing the lens (having glasses) or putting a new lens onto the projector (having surgery to remove the old lens and implant a new lens into your eye).

If the screen the picture is projected onto is twisted or has holes or black spots in it, the picture will also not be right. Your retina acts like the screen the picture is projected onto. Unfortunately, if your retina (or screen) is damaged this is often harder to fix.



What can go wrong with my retina if I have diabetes?

Damage to your retina through diabetes is called 'diabetic retinopathy'. Diabetic retinopathy results when the blood vessels in your eyes are seriously damaged because of persistently high blood glucose or blood pressure, which may result in total loss of vision (or blindness).

What can go wrong with my lens if I have diabetes?

People with diabetes are more likely to develop cataracts and glaucoma. A cataract is when your eye's natural lens becomes cloudy and things start to look blurry, hazy, or less colourful. Cataracts are common in the Maltese islands, however, people suffering from diabetes tend to get cataracts at a younger age and they progress faster. The good news is that cataracts surgery has a very successful rate.

Glaucoma is a disease that damages your eye's optic nerve, which sends visual information from your eyes to your brain. It usually happens when fluid builds up in the front part of your eye. That extra fluid increases the pressure in your eye, damaging the optic nerve which may result in gradual loss of vision. Medications may help reduce pressure in the eye but in others it may involve surgery.