Did you know that diabetes can cause eye problems? If you have diabetes, here are a few things you should know to help keep your eyes healthy.

**WHAT EYE PROBLEMS CAN DIABETES CAUSE?**
Diabetes can cause eye problems like diabetic retinopathy (*ret•i•nop•a•thy*) and glaucoma (*glau•co•ma*).

**Diabetic retinopathy** is damage to the small blood vessels in the back of your eye (*the retina*). The retina is very important because it collects the images you see and sends them to the brain. The damage can cause vision loss or blindness.

**Diabetic glaucoma** is fluid pressure in your eye that can cause damage to the nerve that connects your eye to your brain. If the damage continues, glaucoma can lead to permanent vision loss within a few years.

**HOW CAN I PROTECT MY EYES?**
Here are some things you can do to help make sure that diabetes isn't hurting your eyes:

- **Get a regular eye exam.** Loss of vision can be prevented and made less harmful if treated by your eye care professional, so it is important to see them regularly.

- **Follow the ABC's of diabetes care:**
  
  > **A** for A1C: Keep your blood sugars in a healthy range for you.
  
  **MY GOAL A1C IS ________**
  
  > **B** for blood pressure: Keep your blood pressure controlled and less than 140/90.
  
  **MY GOAL BP IS ___________**
  
  > **C** for Cholesterol: Keep your LDL cholesterol controlled and less than 100.
  
  **MY GOAL CHOLESTEROL IS ________**

- **Quit smoking**
WHAT IS A DIABETIC EYE EXAM?

• It is a special eye exam that looks for problems related to your diabetes.

• This exam is different from a regular vision test.

• An optometrist or ophthalmologist is an eye doctor who will do a special exam on your eyes. Opticians are sometimes confused with eye doctors, but they are people who make glasses and contact lenses. An optician would not do this exam.

• Early on, you might not know if you have eye damage. This exam by your eye doctor is the only way to find out.

• If you wait to see an eye doctor until you have vision problems, it may mean the eye problems have gotten worse and treatment will be harder.

• Medical insurance often covers this eye exam, not vision insurance. Call your insurance provider to find out what is covered.

WHEN DO I NEED AN EYE EXAM?

• If everything is normal, the eye doctor might tell you to get the exam every 2 years. You might need to get the eye exam every year if there are signs of damage.