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DIABETES AND THE EYE

One of the most important reasons to visit an Ophthalmologist is to have the eyes examined for diabetic retinopathy. Diabetes is a long-term condition that can be treated with Insulin, pills or frequently both. Diabetes affects many organ systems and the severity of the disease can depend on how long you have had it and how well your blood sugar is controlled. A simple blood test, the hemoglobin A1C can help your doctor determine how well your blood sugar is being controlled.

We would like to briefly discuss how diabetes could affect your eyes. If your blood sugar goes up very high, as it often does when the disease starts, your vision can blur and you may also be very thirsty and urinate frequently. Diabetes can also contribute to cataract development. Finally diabetes can cause diabetic retinopathy. This is when high sugar levels damage the delicate blood vessels in the retina. These vessels may swell or leak causing fluid to migrate into the retina. Another option is that the vessels can close blocking the retina from getting enough oxygen from the blood. When the disease progresses new blood vessels can grow and cause significant damage to your vision.

A dilated eye examination can help determine how diabetes is affecting your eyes. Even if you are well controlled, this exam needs to be done on a yearly basis. If you are a diabetic we will inform your primary care physician every year about the state of your eye health.