

The Partially Sighted Society



DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

I am diabetic and have been told I have Diabetic Retinopathy. What is it?

Diabetes is a systemic disease resulting from the body's inability to produce insulin. Diabetic Retinopathy is the name given to the deterioration that can occur in the eyes as a result of diabetes.

This condition generally occurs in people who have been living with diabetes for a long time. It is a complication that can occur especially if the diabetes has gone undiagnosed or has been out of control.

What happens with Diabetic Retinopathy?

The back of the eye contains a light sensitive film called the retina. The retina contains light sensitive photoreceptor cells that transmit the light from what we are seeing via the optic nerve to the brain.

The retina is fed with nutrients by a series of small blood vessels. Diabetic Retinopathy occurs when these small blood vessels begin to leak or haemorrhage onto the retina and light sensitive cells. This leak then gives rise to a scar which causes an area of 'non-vision.' For the sufferer this means 'holes' appear in their vision and it is often described as similar to looking through a mud-spattered windscreen or window.

Is there any treatment for Diabetic Retinopathy?

People suffering from diabetes often experience fluctuations in their vision. Any changes should be reported to their G.P. as soon as possible for referral to an eye specialist.

The eye specialist may perform a fluorescein angiography. This involves an intravenous injection of fluorescein that allows the specialist to study the vessel structure in the eye to see where leaks have occurred. Treatment may then involve photocoagulation therapy to eliminate the errant blood vessels and seal the leaks. The aim is to prevent further haemorrhage and loss of sight.

I am experiencing loss of vision because of my diabetes, what now?

If you are diabetic it is very important to maintain constant blood sugar levels and to be in control of your diabetes.

If you are experiencing sight loss due to Diabetic Retinopathy we have trained professionals on hand to offer help, support, advice and training in the use of visual and non-visual aids which making living with a condition such as Diabetic Retinopathy easier.

For more information contact the Partially Sighted Society.

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