



# Diabetes + Your Eyes

## Diabetes-related Eye Disease and Mental Health

### How does diabetes-related eye disease affect mental health?

Diabetes-related eye disease can cause loss of vision. For some, loss of vision can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety, and loss of independence. Not everyone who has vision loss will experience depression or anxiety. Some individuals may notice a change in their desire to socialize with others, or increased frustration with the additional time it may take to accomplish tasks of daily living. If you do experience any of these symptoms, know there is help available.



### Take these steps to support your mental health in addition to your diabetes-related eye disease:



#### **Talk to your primary care doctor, mental health professional, or eye doctor:**

Talk to your doctor about any changes to your emotional well-being. Ask your eye doctor questions on how diabetes-related eye disease will affect your daily life and work. Seek assistance on how to deal with the changes in your life due to diabetes-related eye disease.



**Seek support:** Look for support groups of others who are going through diabetes-related eye disease. MD Support provides a list of support groups near you on their website, [mdsupport.org/support/](https://mdsupport.org/support/). These groups can help you learn about your condition, share your experience, and find support.



**Connect with others and the things that bring you joy:** Stay connected with friends and family to keep you from feeling isolated. Over time, you can find new ways to do the things you love or to discover new hobbies that bring you happiness.



**Exercise:** Exercise can help symptoms of depression or anxiety and make you feel better. Talk to your health care professional to determine what exercise routine may work best for you, especially if you have changes to your vision due to diabetes-related eye disease.



**Seek vision rehabilitation:** Ask your eye doctor to recommend a low vision specialist. The specialist can help to maximize the use of the vision you have.



## How common is diabetes?

You should know that you are not the only one out there living with diabetes. More than 30 million people in the United States have diabetes. One in four do not know they have diabetes. Diabetes is more common among certain populations such as African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

You are more likely to have diabetes if you:

- are 45 or older
- have a family history of the disease
- have high blood pressure
- have excess weight

If you have diabetes, prevention of eye diseases related to diabetes is a priority. Diabetes-related eye disease can cause you to have trouble reading, seeing faces across the room, seeing at night, or even blindness.

The good news is that diabetes-related eye disease can often be prevented or managed by:

- taking good care of yourself through healthy meal planning
- regular exercise
- taking medication as prescribed
- annual visits to an eye doctor

**To learn more about your mental health as you care for your diabetes-related eye disease, check out the following resources:**

### **Vision Loss and Mental Health**

<https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/resources/features/vision-loss-mental-health.html>

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):**

#### **The Mental Health of People with Disabilities**

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/features/mental-health-for-all.html>

### **American Psychological Association: Depression**

<https://www.apa.org/topics/depression>

### **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): Signs and Symptoms**

<https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Warning-Signs-and-Symptoms>

## For more information:

Visit the following webpage for more information about diabetes-related eye disease, insurance information, financial assistance information, and healthy living choices to reduce your risk for eye disease:

### **Diabetes & Your Eyes Resources**

[www.preventblindness.org/diabetes](http://www.preventblindness.org/diabetes)

### **Living Well with Low Vision**

<https://lowvision.preventblindness.org>



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