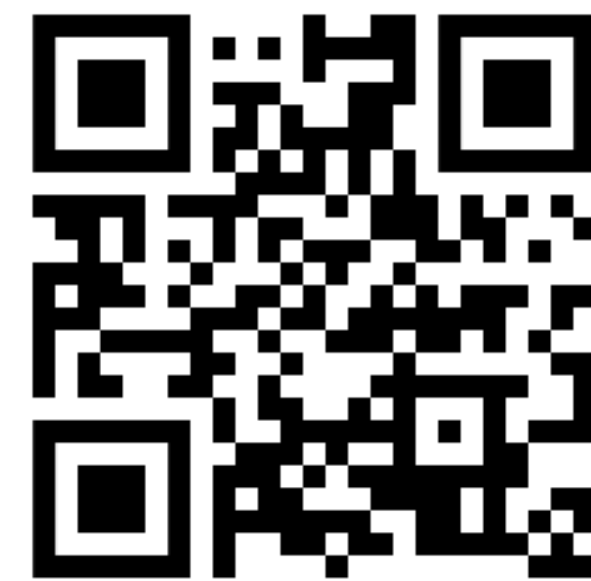


# DIABETES AND YOUR EYES



## WHAT IS DIABETIC RETINOPATHY?

- Sight threatening condition that happens in people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes.
- Too much sugar in the blood damages small blood vessels in the back of the eyes (the retina)
  - When the blood vessels get damaged they leak blood and fluid into the retina. The retina swells and makes vision blurry (pictured below)

## HOW DOES IT CAUSE VISION LOSS?

- In earlier stages, fluid can leak into the macula and cause it to swell (macular edema). The macula helps us see color and fine detail
- In later stages, the retina becomes starved of oxygen, which causes new small blood vessels to grow
  - These new vessels leak blood very easily and cloud vision
  - Detachment of the retina and glaucoma can happen

## HOW DOES SOMEONE KNOW IF THEY HAVE IT?

- Most people will not notice any symptoms in the early stages, even if they have bleeding in their eyes
- In the later stages, symptoms include blurry vision, spots in vision, blind spots, and distorted vision
- The only way to diagnose diabetic retinopathy is through a comprehensive eye exam

## WAYS TO PREVENT RETINOPATHY

- Controlling blood sugar levels
- Taking your medication as prescribed
- Good diet
- Regular exercise
- Keeping blood pressure less than 140/80
- Lowering lipid levels and cholesterol
- Managing your weight
- Avoiding alcohol and smoking

## IMPORTANCE OF YEARLY EXAMS

- The longer someone has had diabetes, the more likely they are to develop retinopathy, even if they are taking all preventative measures and don't have any symptoms
- It is important to detect retinopathy early! It is much easier to treat in the early stages than the later stages.
  - It will also help your doctor know if your medication needs to be adjusted

