



Diabetic Macular Edema

How diabetes affects the eyes



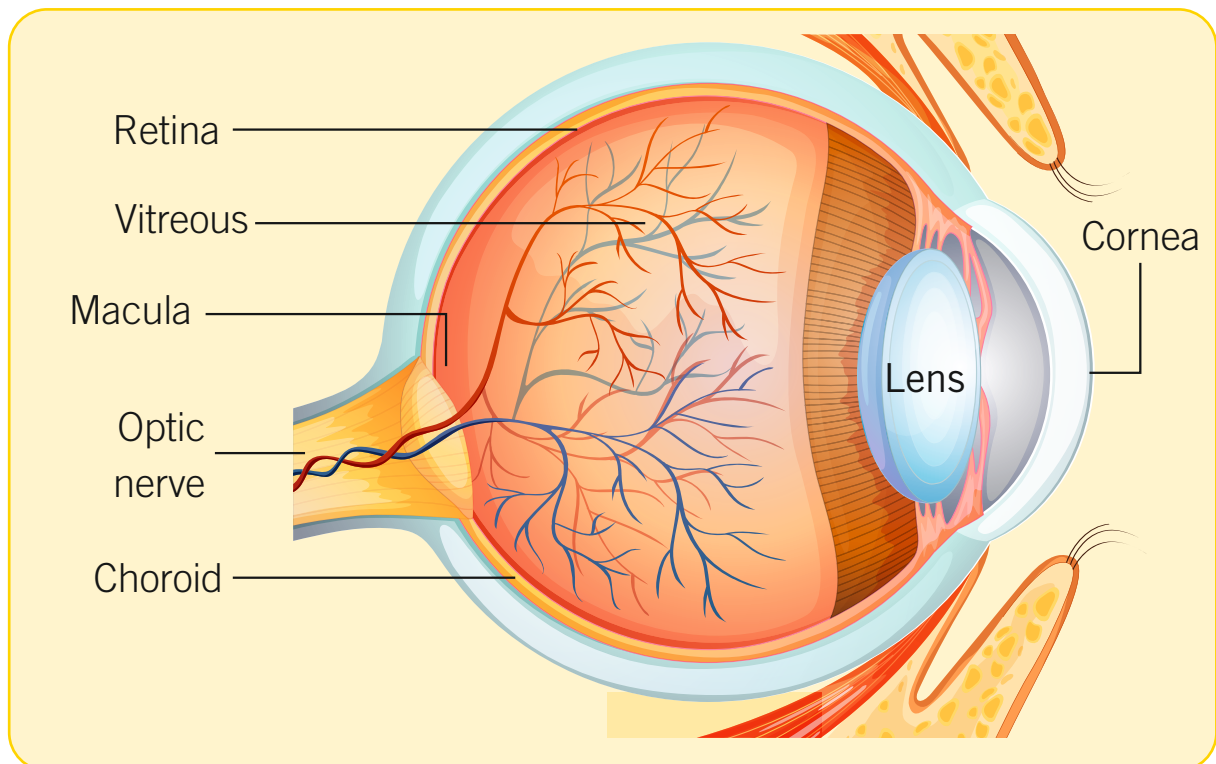
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How diabetes affects the eyes

DME is the abbreviation for **Diabetic Macular Edema** and refers to a **complication of diabetic retinopathy**. Diabetic retinopathy is the most common type of diabetic eye disease and caused by damage to the tiny blood vessels in the back of your eye. DME can occur at any stage of diabetic retinopathy, but is more likely to occur as the disease progresses. And while it may only affect one eye, it often affects both eyes.



▲ Cross-section of the human eye



The macula –

The most precious part of the eye

The **retina** is located in the back of the eye. It is made up of multiple layers of different cells that must work together perfectly to ensure good eyesight. At the center of the retina there is the macula. This is **the most sensitive part of your retina** that is responsible for fine-detail vision. Changes that occur in the area of your macula can cause scar tissue on your macula and result in loss of vision.



Diabetes Mellitus

In Germany, there are six million people living with **Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes**. Diabetes interferes with your body's ability to use and store sugar. Over time, high levels of blood sugar cause damage throughout your body, including your eyes.

In recent years, we have seen a **steady increase in Type 2 diabetes**, reasons are a lack of exercise, an unhealthy diet, being overweight and even your genetic make-up can also play a role.

All people with diabetes (both Types 1 and 2) are at risk of developing diabetic retinopathy, and the longer they have lived with diabetes, the more likely they are to develop diabetic retinopathy.





Diabetic Macular Edema –

A complication of diabetes

DME is caused by long-term exposure to high blood sugar levels, known as **hyperglycaemia**. This is generally caused by diabetes that either wasn't diagnosed early or hasn't been consistently controlled.

Within the back of your eye, there is a **network of tightly woven cells and blood vessels** that form a barrier to control substances entering or leaving your retina. The retina is where all of the images you see are recorded – it acts like the film in a camera.

A person affected by this may eventually start to notice a slight distortion or blurred vision, where straight lines appear wavy, and reading may become more difficult.

DME doesn't affect your peripheral vision, so it won't cause total or "black" blindness. It can, however, lead to loss of central vision as it progresses, which can be severe enough for you to be declared legally blind.



▶ Possible effect of DME: blurred or wavy vision



Regular eye exams

It is important for people with diabetes to have their eyes examined regularly and frequently. You should attend all the appointments your eye specialist schedules for you, whether or not you have symptoms. The reason for this is because timely treatment can help prevent vision loss.



Innovative treatment for DME

The treatment is known as an anti-VEGF. This is an abbreviation for **anti-vascular endothelial growth factor**, which is a description of how it works to protect your vision. The agent blocks a particular protein that creates leaky blood vessels. It does this by keeping weakened blood vessels from being made, which, in turn can help improve your eyesight or stop it from getting worse. It helps reduce the fluid that leaks into the eye, which helps reduce the swelling in the retina and protects your vision. The treatment is a solution (a liquid) that is injected into the eye. While it is understandable to worry about an injection, most people who have this treatment say that the injection is painless and it sounds worse than it really is.



Prevention Combating DME

As someone living with diabetes, it is vital to check **blood sugar levels**, **blood pressure** and blood lipid levels regularly. To keep your eye and body healthy it is advisable to quit smoking and avoid or reduce alcohol intake.



Help for DME patients

Treatments with **anti-VEGF agents** can help to stabilise your eyesight. In some cases it may even improve vision. Your eye doctor can tell you which treatment might suit you.

For people with visual impairment **therapeutic appliances** can help to make the most of their remaining vision in their day-to-day life, when reading or watching TV.

Additionally there are many **self-help groups**, where people with similar problems meet to give practical experience and encouragement.

VisusVital will support you throughout your DME treatment and will provide you **additional information** about your condition.

For further information,



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