

Diabetic retinopathy

- If you have diabetes, blood vessels in the retina, the light-sensitive layer at the back of your eye, can become leaky or blocked. This is called diabetic retinopathy.
- An eye examination at least once a year will detect diabetic retinopathy at an early stage. You will not be aware of some unhealthy vessels until they bleed, so regular eye checks are essential. Special photographs, called fluorescein angiographs, may be taken to see whether the vessels in the back of your eyes are healthy.
- If the leaky blood vessels are in the centre of the retina, it can become waterlogged and your vision blurred. The leakage can be reduced by either laser treatment or injections of a drug into the eye with a very fine needle. Both are out-patient procedures and the injection is performed in a special 'clean room'.
- If blood vessels become blocked, new unhealthy ones form and may bleed into the eye cavity. Repeated laser treatment can destroy blocked vessels and shrink new unhealthy ones before they bleed. If extensive laser treatment is needed, your eye can be numbed with a local anaesthetic. The treatment may cause you to lose side and night vision, but may save your central vision.
- If vessels continue to bleed or scar tissue forms and pulls on the retina, you will need an operation called a vitrectomy to remove the blood and scar tissue from the main eye cavity.

