

DIABETIC EYE SCREENING IN WALES IS CHANGING FOR SOME PEOPLE

What is diabetic eye screening?

Eye screening is a way of spotting eye problems before you notice any changes to your sight. Everyone living with diabetes over the age of 12 will get an invite to regular eye screening.

Eye problems are very rare in children younger than 12 years old, so that's why they don't automatically get this check.

At your eye screening, your healthcare professional will look for signs of eye disease caused by your diabetes. The aim of your regular eye screening is to catch any issues early on. This way you can get the **treatment** you need in time.

It's important to know that this type of eye screening isn't the same as a regular eye test with an optician. You still need to have regular eye tests, as they check for lots of other problems.

Find more details about eye screening and eye disease caused by diabetes [here](#).

How is diabetic eye screening changing?

Until now everyone with diabetes over the age of 12 years in Wales has been invited to eye screening every year. From 26th June 2023 some people will be invited for eye screening once every two years, some will continue to be invited every year and others will be invited more often. How often you are invited to eye screening will depend on your eye health and the results of previous eye screening.

Who will these changes affect?

Changes to the back of the eye because of diabetes happen slowly over time. Some people with diabetes who have no changes to the retina in the back of the eye due to diabetes are at lower risk of developing changes that may affect their vision. People who have attended their last two eye screening appointments and had no changes in the retina due to diabetes may now be invited for eye screening once every two years.

People who have certain changes in their retina in the back of the eye due to diabetes identified at an eye screening appointment may have higher risk of developing changes that affect their vision. These people will be invited for eye screening more often than every two years.

What if I have changes in my retina due to diabetes?

If you have changes in your retina due to diabetes you will be invited to screening every year or more often if needed. These changes may mean you need different tests or treatment from hospital eye services.

When will the changes occur?

These changes are being implemented in Wales from June 26th 2023.

Why is this change happening?

The research into diabetes and eye health has shown that eye screening every year is not needed for everyone. We are now able to tell who is at low, medium or high risk of sight loss due to diabetes. Those who are at low risk of sight loss due to diabetes can be invited for screening less often.

How can I be sure that signs of diabetes eye disease will not be missed if I am screened every two years?

If your most recent screening test result showed no signs of diabetes eye disease, this means you are in the group of people with diabetes who have the lowest risk of eye disease developing. Evidence gathered over several years shows it is safe for you to wait up to 24 months between screening appointments. There is very little chance you will develop sight-threatening eye disease between appointments.

What if something changes in my diabetes management?

If for any reason you or your diabetes team are concerned about the changes to your diabetes management that might affect your eyes, then your diabetes team can request an earlier appointment for eye screening.

Is eye screening still important for everyone with diabetes?

Eye screening is an important part of managing your condition, regardless of the type of diabetes you have. This is because having diabetes can mean you're more at risk of developing eye problems, such as **diabetic retinopathy**. This can sometimes lead to sight loss.

As diabetic retinopathy doesn't show any symptoms in the early stages, it can become quite advanced before you start to notice it. Going to your routine eye screening can help you spot and treat diabetic retinopathy early, which should prevent it from progressing to a stage where it's more difficult to treat.

Is this just happening in Wales?

No. Northern Ireland and Scotland have already moved to screening every 2 years. This change will also happen in England over the next few years.

What should I do if I am worried about these changes?

If you are feeling anxious about having to wait longer than usual for your appointment, we're here for you.

There is **good evidence** to show that it is safe for people with no retinopathy to wait two years between screenings.

We've also got lots of information to help you **keep your eyes healthy** during this time, so you can **prevent eye complications** from developing.

Find more information on the Public Health Wales website [here](#). Please find information in Welsh [here](#).

If you do notice any changes in your vision, it's important that you call your GP or diabetes team straight away and explain your situation. If you can't get through, call 111 for advice.