Your Guide to Healthy Eyes

Maybe you’ve noticed that street signs look blurry at night when you’re driving. Or maybe tiny dark spots have appeared in your vision. These are among the signs of retinopathy, a common eye complication of diabetes. Because diabetic retinopathy often goes unnoticed until vision loss occurs, people with diabetes should get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.

Though it sounds like a single condition, diabetic eye disease is actually a group of vision-related problems that can result from various factors, including chronically high blood glucose and blood pressure. Diabetes affects the entire body and, if it’s not properly managed, can lead to complications, such as damage to your blood vessels, and nerves, including those in your eye.

Let’s take a look at the various eye conditions:

**Diabetic retinopathy** affects blood vessels in the light-sensitive tissue called the retina that lines the back of the eye. It is the most common cause of vision loss among people with diabetes and the leading cause of vision impairment and blindness among working-age adults.

**Diabetic macular edema (DME).** A consequence of diabetic retinopathy, DME is swelling in an area of the retina called the macula.

**Cataract** is a clouding of the eye’s lens. Adults with diabetes are two to five times more likely than those without diabetes to develop cataracts. Cataracts also tend to develop at an earlier age in people with diabetes.

**Glaucoma** is a group of diseases that damage the eye’s optic nerve—the bundle of nerve fibers that connect the eye to the brain. Some types of glaucoma are associated with elevated pressure inside the eye. In adults, diabetes nearly doubles the risk of glaucoma.

The good news is that you can lower your risk for eye problems by managing your diabetes—an important part of staying healthy head to toe—and getting regular eye exams. An eye doctor (ophthalmologist) can detect eye problems before they get too serious and can help you treat these problems early.

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Block Winter Bugs with Timely Vaccines

**Fight Flu**
Did you know it takes about two weeks after a vaccination for the antibodies to develop and provide protection against the flu? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu season can begin as early as October and last well into May. Flu activity usually peaks in January, February, or later. This is why it’s important to get your flu shot before winter hits.

While the CDC recommends everyone over six months of age have a seasonal flu vaccination, it’s especially important for people with COPD, asthma, cardiovascular disease, or diabetes. For more information, visit CDC.gov/flu. Flu benefit information is available at PacificSource.com/flu or by contacting our Customer Service team at cs@pacificsource.com or (888) 977-9299.

**Nix Pneumonia**
Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. Anyone can get pneumonia, but some people are at greater risk for this infection than others. Pneumococcal vaccines are very good at preventing severe infection and hospitalization.

The CDC recommends the pneumonia vaccine for:
- All adults 65 years or older
- People ages 2–64 with certain medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease
- Adults age 19 through 64 who smoke cigarettes

Ask your doctor whether you should get the pneumonia vaccine and what would be the best timing for you. For more information, visit CDC.gov/pneumonia. Pneumonia benefit information is available by contacting our Customer Service team at cs@pacificsource.com or (888) 977-9299.
Oral Health & Overall Health: The Connection

Your teeth may not be considered bones, but they do contain the strongest substance in your body, enamel. Enamel is composed of 96 percent minerals, making it susceptible to a demineralization process, which accounts for dental caries, or cavities. Cavities, along with periodontal disease, are among the two biggest threats to oral health. There is growing evidence that links poor oral health to several chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. There is still a lot to learn about the connection between oral health and chronic disease, but one thing is certain: maintaining healthy teeth is an important part of your overall health. Here are some ways you can take care of your oral health.

1. **Visit your dentist** at least twice a year.
2. **Brush and floss your teeth** at least twice a day. Remember to brush your gums along with your teeth. This will help stimulate blood flow and improve your gum health.
3. **Use a mouth rinse** to help reduce plaque.
4. **Avoid soft drinks, fruit juices, and sugary foods.**
5. **Watch for signs of periodontal disease,** such as:
   - Gums that bleed during and after brushing or flossing
   - Red, swollen, or tender gums
   - Persistent bad breath or bad taste in your mouth
   - Receding gums
   - Deep pockets between teeth and gums
   - Loose or shifting teeth
   - Changes in your bite
   - Changes in the way your dentures fit
6. **Some medications can affect oral health.** Talk with your doctor if your oral health has suddenly changed after starting a new medication.
7. **Avoid smoking tobacco** or using smokeless tobacco products.

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Healthy Eye Checklist

- **Try your best to maintain healthy blood glucose levels.** Talk with your doctor about what range is optimal for you.
- **Keep your blood pressure under control.** Hypertension can cause damage to the blood vessels in the retina, the area at the back of the eye where images focus.
- **Keep your cholesterol under control.** Cholesterol buildup on the wall of a blood vessel can break off and travel to the eye, which can cause damage.
- **Avoid using tobacco and avoid second hand smoke.** Smoking increases your risk of developing retinopathy, causing damage to the blood vessels in the retina, putting your vision at risk.
- **Use Ultra-violet protected eye glasses.** Some UV damage may be cumulative, leading to cataracts or macular degeneration later in life.
- **See your ophthalmologist regularly for retinal exams and eye pressure checks.** Detecting early changes in your vision is key to preventing further damage to your eyes.

If you’d like support in reaching a healthy blood glucose, blood pressure, or cholesterol level, contact us to learn more about working with a nurse or dietitian health coach.
Minestrone Soup

Ingredients
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1 large carrot, sliced
- 2 Tbsp. oil
- 1 large potato, peeled and chopped
- 2 cans (15 oz. each or 3 1/2 cups) low sodium vegetable or beef broth (see notes)
- 1 can (15 oz.) chopped tomatoes
- 1 can (15 oz.) kidney beans, drained
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- ½ cup uncooked macaroni
- 2 small zucchini, sliced
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper

Directions
1. In a 5 quart saucepan over medium heat, cook onion, celery, and carrot in oil, stirring constantly until onion is soft, but not browned.
2. Add potato, tomatoes, broth, beans, and basil.
3. Bring to a boil then reduce heat. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes.
4. Add macaroni and zucchini. Cook another 15 minutes.
5. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.
6. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Notes
- Use any vegetables you have on hand.
- Cook your own dry beans. One can is about 1½ to 1¾ cups drained beans.

Makes: 10 cups
Prep time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 45 minutes

Nutrition Facts per Serving
(one cup)
- Calories 150
- Total Fat 3.5g
- Sodium 250mg
- Carbohydrate 23g
- Fiber 5g
- Protein 7g

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