CAN DIABETIC EYE DAMAGE BE PREVENTED?

TIGHT BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL CUT THE RISK 76%.

76% lower risk of developing retinopathy with tight blood sugar control over about 6.5 years (DCCT trial, 1,441 people with type 1 diabetes).

DCCT Research Group. New England Journal of Medicine, 1993 [1]

WHAT DID THEY CHANGE?

- ✓ **Intensive blood sugar control**
- ✓ **Frequent blood sugar checks**
- ✓ **Close medical follow-up**

This was a blood-sugar-control trial, not a diet trial. Diet studies are on the back.

WHAT SHOULD YOU ASK YOUR DOCTOR AND EYE DOCTOR?

1. **How often should I have a dilated eye exam?** [2]
2. **What blood sugar (A1c) target will best protect my eyes?** [1]
3. **Could changing my diet help protect my eyes?** [3,4,5]
4. **If my blood sugar drops quickly, should my eyes be checked more often?** [6]
5. **If my numbers improve, could we lower my diabetes medication?** [4]

30% of 44 people with retinopathy saw their eyes improve on Dr. Kempner's rice-and-fruit diet in the 1950s, once thought impossible (no comparison group).

Kempner et al. · Postgraduate Medicine · 1958 [5]

! **Work with your doctor, not around them. Never stop a medication on your own.**

BOTTOM LINE Your eyes ride on your blood sugar. Strong proof for control; diet studies are promising. Keep your eye exams.

MORE OF THE EVIDENCE

- In 1,441 people with type 1 diabetes, tight blood sugar control lowered the risk of developing retinopathy by 76% and slowed its worsening by 54% over about 6.5 years. [1]
- In a 22-week randomized trial of 99 people with type 2 diabetes, a low-fat vegan diet lowered A1c by 1.23 points vs. 0.38 on a standard diabetes diet (among those whose medications did not change). Eyes were not measured. [4]
- In a diet trial of 3,614 people with type 2 diabetes, a Mediterranean diet with extra-virgin olive oil was linked to 44% lower risk of new retinopathy than a low-fat diet. This was a secondary analysis with only 74 cases. [3]
- In the 1950s, Dr. Walter Kempner put 100 people with diabetes on a very low-fat rice-and-fruit diet. Of the 44 with retinopathy, 30% saw their eyes improve, once thought impossible. There was no comparison group (highlighted by Dr. Greger). [5,7]

Keep in mind: Quickly lowering blood sugar can briefly worsen retinopathy in some people, though the long-term benefits are far larger. Keep up with eye exams when your numbers change.

> **My own diabetic retinopathy cleared up after I went plant-based in February 2013. That's my story, not proof.**
>
> Lex Frasure, HealthyAgingWithLex.com (not a medical professional)

WE TAKE ZERO PRESCRIPTIONS.

That's our choice, not a rule for you. Some prescriptions save lives, like antibiotics for an infection. If you are not changing your diet, stay on the medications your doctor prescribes. If you go plant-based, keep up with your blood work. That way your doctor can safely reduce your medications or take you off them altogether.

I'm not anti-medicine. I'm pro-health.

Don't take my word for any of this. Check it with your favorite AI, read the original studies, then bring them to your doctor.

NOTES FROM MY APPOINTMENT

DATE AND DOCTOR

WHAT WE AGREED TO TRY

WHEN WE WILL RECHECK

SOURCES

[1] DCCT Research Group. New England Journal of Medicine, 1993. The effect of intensive treatment of diabetes on the development and progression of long-term complications in insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8366922/

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[3] Díaz-López A, et al. Diabetes Care, 2015. Mediterranean diet, retinopathy, nephropathy, and microvascular diabetes complications: a post hoc analysis of a randomized trial. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26370380/

[4] Barnard ND, et al. Diabetes Care, 2006. A low-fat vegan diet improves glycemic control and cardiovascular risk factors in a randomized clinical trial in individuals with type 2 diabetes. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16873779/

[5] Kempner W, et al. Postgraduate Medicine, 1958. Effect of rice diet on diabetes mellitus associated with vascular disease. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/13591100/

[6] DCCT Research Group. Archives of Ophthalmology, 1998. Early worsening of diabetic retinopathy in the Diabetes Control and Complications Trial. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9682700/

[7] Greger M. NutritionFacts.org video, 2015. Can Diabetic Retinopathy Be Reversed? https://nutritionfacts.org/video/can-diabetic-retinopathy-be-reversed/

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