

Diabetic Macular Edema – What You Need to Know

What is it?

DME is a complication from diabetes in which blood vessels in the eye are damaged, and fluid accumulates in the central part of the eye. When this happens, vision becomes blurred and can be severe. If untreated, 20% to 30% of those affected can experience moderate vision loss.

Types of DME

There are 2 kinds of diabetic macular edema:

Focal DME is caused by tiny abnormalities in blood vessels, known as microaneurysms.

Diffuse DME is caused by widening of retinal capillaries, the thin blood vessels that are located in the back of the eye.

The severity of diabetic macular edema is dependent upon several factors:

- What type and how long the patient has had diabetes
- Severe hypertension, very high blood pressure
- Fluid retention
- Hypoalbuminemia, or low protein in body fluids
- Hyperlipidemia, or high fat levels in the blood

Symptoms

Include:

- Blurred vision
- Double vision
- Eye floaters

If you have diabetes you should have your vision checked regularly. Be sure to mention if you notice changes in your vision.

Treatment

Surgery is aimed at maintaining vision and reducing future vision loss. Two types of procedures are available:

- Laser treatment for focal DME: Uses a laser light to close leaking blood vessels, preventing more fluid from entering the macula.
- Laser treatment for diffuse DME: Uses grid laser treatment to narrow dilated blood vessels.

In both procedures, patient should be rechecked 3 months after surgery to make sure that the DME is responding to therapy.

Medicines injected into the eye include anti-VEGF and corticosteroid-based treatments.

Additional Information

Diabetic Macular Edema Support Group <http://www.drugs.com/answers/support-group/diabetic-macular-edema/>