InHealth

NHS

SUFFOLK AND NORTH EAST ESSEX DIABETIC EYE SCREENING PROGRAMME

YOUR GUIDE TO **DIABETIC EYE SCREENING**

InHealth | MAKING HEALTHCARE BETTER

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WHAT IS DIABETIC RETINOPATHY?

Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is an eye disease, caused by complications from diabetes, when high blood sugar levels damage the small blood vessels at the back of the eye (retina). It doesn't have any symptoms at its early stages and can go unnoticed until the condition progresses. It can cause blindness if it is left undiagnosed and untreated.

Diabetic Eye Screening video
WATCH HERE

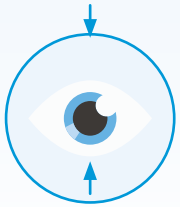
COMMON SYMPTOMS

Blurred or distorted vision

Difficulty reading

Floaters or spots

Shadow across the field of vision

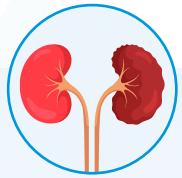

Eye pressure

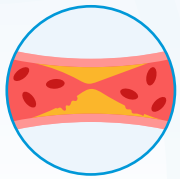
Difficulty with colour perception

RISK FACTORS

Blood sugar irregularities

High blood pressure


Kidney disease


High cholesterol

Pregnancy

Asian/Afro-Caribbean ethnicity background

SAFEGUARD YOUR SIGHT

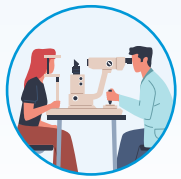
Stop smoking

Exercise regularly

Maintain a healthy weight

Control blood pressure, cholesterol & blood sugar

Take medications as prescribed


Attend your diabetic eye screening appointments

Early signs of DR can be detected by taking photographs of the retina during diabetic eye screening.

Seek medical advice if you notice sudden vision changes.

WHAT IS DIABETIC EYE SCREENING?

Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss. As someone with diabetes, your eyes are at risk of damage from diabetic retinopathy. Screening can detect this condition early before you notice any changes to your vision.

Diabetic Retinopathy (DR)

This condition occurs when high blood sugar affects the small blood vessels, damaging the part of the eye, called retina. It can cause the blood vessels in the retina to leak or become blocked. This can affect your sight.

Importance of screening

Eye screening is an important part of your diabetes care. Untreated diabetic retinopathy is one of the most common causes of sight loss. When the condition is caught early, treatment is effective at reducing or preventing damage to your sight.

Remember, diabetic eye screening is not covered as part of your normal eye examination with an optician. Screening does not look for other eye conditions and you should continue to visit your optician regularly for an eye examination.

Diabetic eye screening

WATCH HERE

The screening test

1. We assess your visual acuity by asking you to read an eye chart.
2. We put drops in your eyes to temporally make your pupils larger. This is important because it allows us to get a much better view of the retina and detect the early signs of diabetic retinopathy. You may find that the drops briefly sting. Pregnant patients receive eye drops with a lesser strength.

3. We take photographs of the back of your eyes. The camera does not come into contact with your eyes. We send the photographs to an expert to review.
4. The appointment will last approximately **30 minutes**.
5. We aim to send a letter to you and your GP within **3 weeks** letting you know your screening results.

When is screening offered?

We invite everyone with diabetes aged 12 and over for diabetic eye screening. How often you are invited for screening will depend on the results from your last 2 screening appointments. If no diabetic retinopathy was detected, you will be invited for screening every 1 or 2 years.

Patients should be screened continuously for life if there has ever been a definite diagnosis of diabetes, excluding gestational diabetes. This includes people with diabetes in remission.

Screening is very important when you are pregnant because the risk of serious eye problems is greater, so if you are pregnant, you will be screened every three months until the end of your pregnancy.

Side effects

The eye drops may affect your vision for a few hours, so you should not drive after your appointment.

You may experience blurred vision, sensitivity to light, dry mouth. An adverse reaction to these drops is extremely rare. However, if you experience any unusual symptoms such as headache, vomiting, eye pain or continued blurred vision after attending the retinal screening clinic, you should go to your local hospital's eye casualty department or seek advice by calling NHS Direct on 111.

WHAT IS DIABETIC EYE SCREENING? – EASY READ

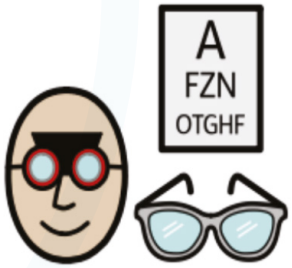
1. Waiting area

Make your way to the venue waiting area. You can bring someone with you to the appointment. The screener will come and collect you for your appointment.

2. Question

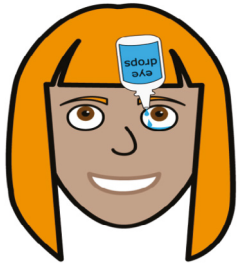
You can ask questions at any time during your appointment.

3. Eye chart



Bring any glasses and contact lenses you usually wear. We will ask you to look at charts that have letters or pictures on them.

4. Eye drops

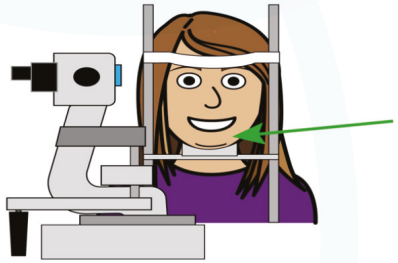


You will have eye drops. The drops might make your eyes sting. This will not last long.

5. 15 minutes

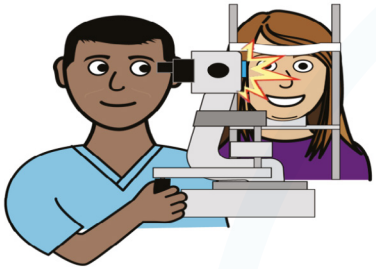
Return to the waiting area for eye drops to work. This will take 15 minutes.

6. Chin and forehead



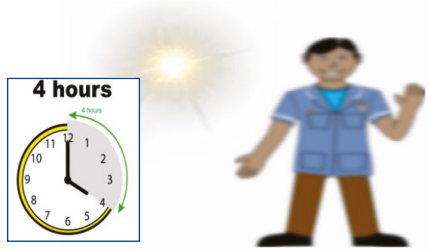
You will be called by the screener. You will be asked to sit at the camera, lean slightly forward and put your chin on the rest.

7. Eye test



The screener will take photographs of the back of your eyes. There will be a flash of light. The camera does not touch your eyes.

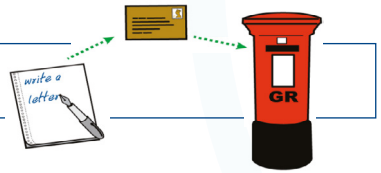
8. Bright and blurry



Bring sunglasses. The drops may be uncomfortable for a few seconds and will make your vision blurry and everything will be bright. This can last for 4-6 hours.

9. By post

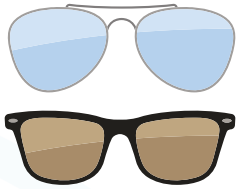
You will receive your result letter in 2-4 weeks.



PRACTICAL HINTS AND TIPS ON THE DAY

What should I bring to my diabetic eye screening appointment?

Any glasses that you use for looking into the distance



Sunglasses, as your eyes may be light sensitive after the drops

Information regarding the health of your eyes, or information you want us to know

Any medication that you will need or may need

Something to drink and eat

Someone to assist with personal needs, if required

We use eye drops to temporarily make your pupils larger. This is important because it gives us a much better view of the retina, however it means your pupils will not be as reactive to block out bright lights. This can cause glare and makes your vision blurry. You should not drive for at least 4 hours after you have had dilation drops.

There will be a bright flash of light when we take the photos of your eyes. Please let your Retinal Screener know if you have photosensitive epilepsy.

Reasonable adjustments

Anyone with a disability, health condition or impairment, who attends our services, should receive care and treatment that is of the highest quality.

Improving our approach to support people with disabilities, whether that be in the environment, in how we do things, or in the way we communicate, is known as making 'reasonable adjustments.'

Please call our **Bookings office on 01473 954800** to discuss any specific needs you may have and ensure your screening appointment will run as smoothly as possible.

Reasonable adjustments we can offer include:

- extended appointment time
- priority appointments at a specific part of the day
- different screening venue
- communication support
- allowing a family member or carer/s to stay all the time
- a quiet place to wait away from the main waiting area
- allocating a clinician by gender
- easy read information
- visit to the screening venue prior to the appointment

HOW TO BOOK AN APPOINTMENT

You'll receive a letter inviting you to the screening test within 3 months of your diagnosis with diabetes. The appointment letter will tell you when and where you will have the test. If the date, time, or location of the test are not convenient to you, you can call the **Bookings Office on 01473 954800** to reschedule your appointment.

Your options

It is your choice whether or not to have the screening. If you decide that the screening is not for you and you do not want any more invitations, you can opt out.

Opting out is something to think through carefully. It could mean that if you develop the condition being screened for in the future, early signs might be missed. You may want to discuss any questions or concerns with your GP or someone from the local screening programme before making a decision. Opt out can be for 1, 2 or 3 years. After this period, you will be re-invited, but are free to opt out for another term.

If you do choose to opt out, remember that you can always opt back in.

Manage your diabetic eye screening appointments online with our patient portal

Find us online at:
https://portal.sneedesp.co.uk

Privacy notice

What personal data do we collect about you and where from?
Information from your eye screening appointment (including your results and images), your GP Practice and the Hospital Eye Service will be kept on a register of people with diabetes to provide the screening service and monitor your needs and the quality of care provided. The register holds your full name, NHS number, gender, date of birth, ethnic group, phone numbers, correspondence addresses, and details of your GP Practice, as well as details of your medical record related to diabetes and eye health.

Who do we share your personal data with?
The DESP will keep information about you and your diabetes care to ensure we deliver a safe and quality service. The register is maintained by InHealth Intelligence Ltd an NHS Business Partner contracted by the NHS to deliver the screening service.

Transport for patients

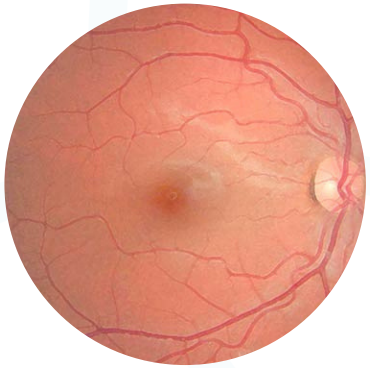
The Screening Programme does not arrange transport for patients to and from their diabetic eye screening appointment. However, our Bookings Department can provide you with telephone numbers for hospital or community transport, available in your area. If you use hospital transport, please ensure your eye screening appointment is before 1:30pm.

Patients who are using the patient transport service may have to wait to be collected and therefore you should consider bringing any medication, required walking aids, some food and a drink. If you require help with personal care, please attend with a carer or someone to assist you.

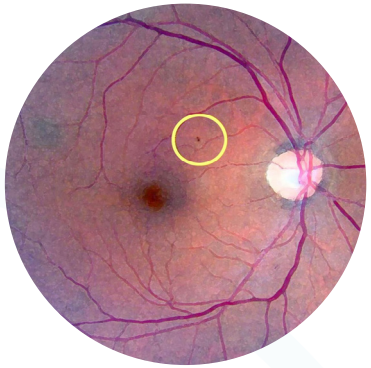
Mobility Issues

All our screening venues are accessible to wheelchair users; however, we don't have provisions for hoists and our staff are not able to move patients out of their chairs. It's important that the patient can hold their head still, upright and lean forward unaided from their wheelchairs without assistance. Remember, if you have any specific concerns or need further guidance, it's best to contact us directly.

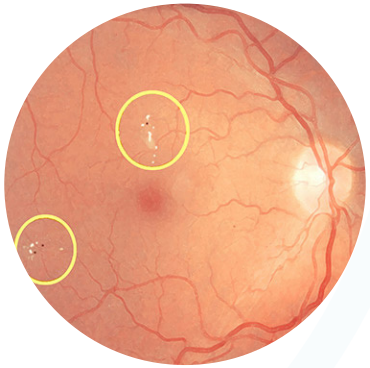
WHAT DO YOUR RESULTS MEAN?



No Diabetic Retinopathy – Images Appear Normal

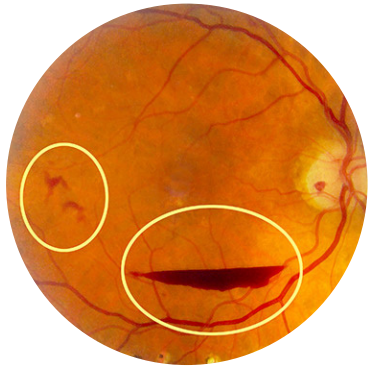


Background Diabetic Retinopathy Changes



Diabetic Maculopathy Changes – Routine Referral

Preproliferative Diabetic Retinopathy – Routine Referral



Proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy – Urgent Referral

Your possible results are:

- No retinopathy
- Background retinopathy
- Degrees of referable retinopathy (Routine or Urgent)
- If digital images are not clear enough to allow the image of your retina to be graded, then a second test using a method called slit lamp biomicroscopy will be required.

The vast majority of results are no retinopathy or background retinopathy, neither of which requires a referral to the hospital eye service for further examination.

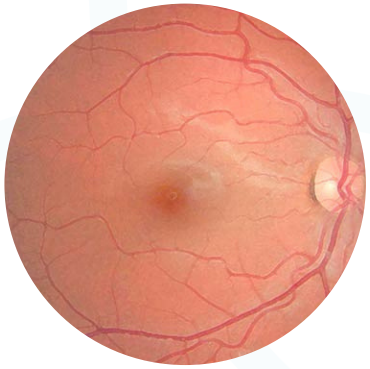
If we identify that you have background diabetic retinopathy you should discuss this with the GP who is looking after your diabetes to optimise control of your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol, and preferably avoid smoking.

If you have referable retinopathy identified at a screening appointment, you will be referred and should attend your hospital eye service outpatient appointment.

In some cases a referral to hospital is not necessary. We will refer you to the Digital Surveillance pathway for an optical coherence tomography scan (OCT) and more frequent screening.

THE GRADING CLASSIFICATIONS

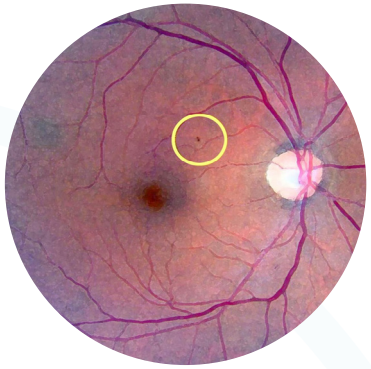
When we are reviewing your retinal images they will be classified as one of the following:



No Diabetic Retinopathy – Images Appear Normal

This is a good finding and means that on the images we assessed we could not see any features that caused concern.

From October 2023 people living with diabetes in England started to be invited for screening every 2 years if their last 2 routine screening tests found no signs of diabetic retinopathy.

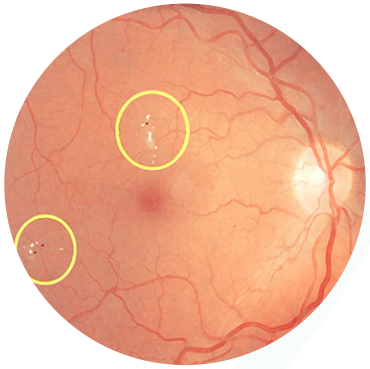


Background Diabetic Retinopathy Changes

This finding means that small changes in the blood vessels were found on the images we assessed. However, we could not see any features that caused any concern.

Retinal features sometimes appear and disappear from year to year and do not necessarily mean things are 'getting worse'.

Patients should expect their next diabetic eye screening to be in 1 year.



Diabetic Maculopathy Changes – Routine Referral

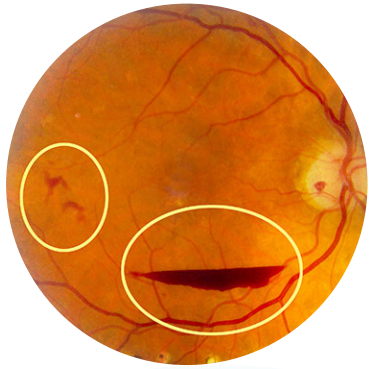
This means that retinopathy changes were found within the macula area on the images we assessed. Low risk maculopathy doesn't require treatment. The next appointment will be in a surveillance clinic with OCT for closer monitoring in 3 or 6 months intervals.

High risk maculopathy needs further assessment or treatment. The next appointment will be at the hospital eye service within 13 weeks.

Preproliferative Diabetic Retinopathy – Routine Referral

The changes found on the images need further investigation. Low risk pre-proliferative changes will be monitored in a surveillance clinic with OCT and 7-field photography in 3 or 6 months intervals.

Severe pre-proliferative changes are more likely to progress to proliferative retinopathy that needs treatment within a year, so the patient will be referred to the hospital eye service and seen within 13 weeks.



Proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy – Urgent Referral

This means that larger changes were found needing prompt further investigation. We will need to refer more quickly than normal as these changes could cause damage if not assessed by the hospital eye service.

Patients should expect to be seen within 6 weeks.

SURVEILLANCE PATHWAY OPTIONS

Digital surveillance and Optical coherence tomography (OCT)

Digital surveillance (DS) allows more frequent screening of those people who may be at increased risk of developing diabetic retinopathy.

You may be referred to the Digital Surveillance screening pathway (DS) if you have mild to moderate pre-proliferative diabetic retinopathy, diabetic maculopathy or treated and stable proliferative diabetic retinopathy.

OCT is a non-invasive imaging test using light waves to take cross-section pictures of your retina. OCT can help us see the different layers of the retina.

Your result letter will inform you that we need to check your eyes more often. Your next screening appointment will be in 3 months, and it can be in 3 or 6 months thereafter, depending on the findings at every next screening.

Diabetic Eye Screening during pregnancy

When you are pregnant, the risk of serious eye problems is greater. For this reason, pregnant women require photographic screening that is more frequent.

You will be offered screening at, or soon after, your first antenatal clinic visit and also after 28 weeks of pregnancy.

If early stages of retinopathy are found at the first screening, you will be offered another test between 16 and 20 weeks of pregnancy.

If significant retinopathy is found at any screening, you will be referred to an eye specialist.

Slit lamp biomicroscopy surveillance

Slit lamp biomicroscopy surveillance (SLBS) is an examination technique used when adequate retinal examination cannot be obtained using digital photography.

There are several reasons why a patient may get a non-assessable result from the digital screening examination, one example is that the lens of the eye can get too cloudy to see the back of the eye; this may be because of a cataract. Patients should expect to be seen within 13 weeks.

People with diabetes may be referred for annual slit lamp biomicroscopy (SLB) appointments while retinal images are unobtainable.

SUFFOLK AND NORTH EAST ESSEX (SNEE) DESP – YOUR LOCAL EYE SCREENING PROVIDER

Diabetic Eye Screening in the Suffolk and North East Essex areas is provided by InHealth Intelligence under the Suffolk and North East Essex Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (SNEE DESP).

Suffolk and North East Essex Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (SNEE DESP)

Mainline 01473 954 830

Bookings Team 01473 954 800

Failsafe Team 01473 954 825

Engagement Team 01473 954 830

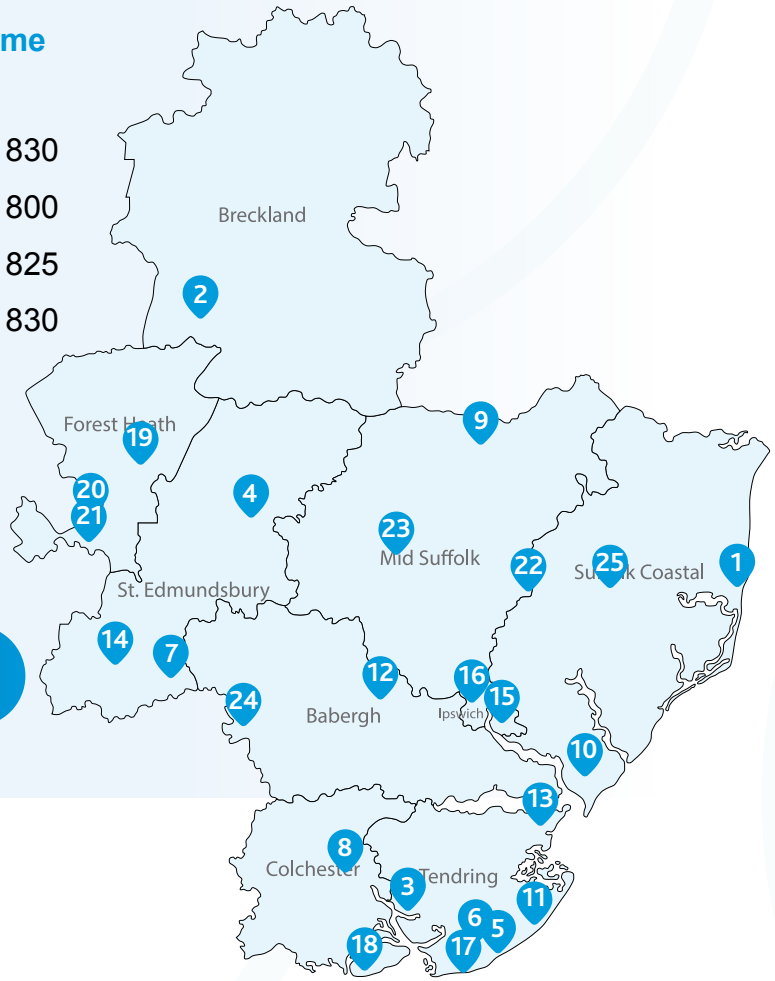
enquiries.sneedesp@nhs.net

failsafe.sneedesp@nhs.net

desp.engagement@nhs.net

www.sneedesp.co.uk

Contact and Locations – InHealth Group



1	Aldeburgh	Church Farm Surgery, Aldeburgh
2	Brandon	Brandon Day Centre
3	Brightlingsea	Brightlingsea Council Office
4	Bury St Edmunds	Southgate Community Centre
5	Clacton-on-Sea	Clacton Hospital
6	Clacton-on-Sea	Albert Edward Hall Community Centre
7	Clare	Combined Halls of Clare
8	Colchester	Portland Medical Practice
9	Eye	Hartismere Hospital
10	Felixstowe	Felixstowe Community Hub
11	Frinton-on-Sea	The Connaught Clinic
12	Hadleigh	Hadleigh Eye & Hearing Centre
13	Harwich	Fryatt Hospital
14	Haverhill	Chalkstone Community Centre
15	Ipswich	Masterlord Office Village
16	Ipswich	Community Action Suffolk (Brightspace)
17	Jaywick	Jaywick Community & Resource Centre
18	Mersea Island	The Mersea Centre
19	Mildenhall	Mildenhall Health Centre
20	Newmarket	Foley House, Newmarket
21	Newmarket	Orchard House Surgery, Newmarket
22	Otley	Otley Surgery
23	Stowmarket	Stowhealth
24	Sudbury	The Christopher Centre, Sudbury
25	Wickham Market	Wickham Market Resource Centre

HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR EYES AND REDUCE THE RISK OF DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

You can reduce your risk of developing diabetic retinopathy, or help prevent it getting worse, by:

- Controlling your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Taking your diabetes medicine as prescribed
- Attending all your screening appointments
- Getting medical advice quickly if you notice any changes to your vision
- Maintaining a healthy weight, eating a healthy, balanced diet, exercising regularly and stopping smoking

Diabetic retinopathy Prevention – NHS

Follow us on facebook

GETTING INVOLVED

Share your experience in diabetic eye screening and have a say in the way our service is provided in your area.

Join our Patient Forum

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Become a Community Champion to help us spread the diabetic eye screening word to your neighbours and friends.

Become a Community Champion

Express your interest by emailing **desp.engagement@nhs.net**, calling **01473 954800** or via our Facebook Page **www.facebook.com/sneedesp**

DIABETIC EYE SCREENING: FIND IMPORTANT INFORMATION ONLINE

To read NHS information about Diabetic Retinopathy and Diabetic Eye Screening scan the QR code, click on the link under the relevant text or enter the web address for the information you need.

Your guide to diabetic eye screening
www.gov.uk/phe/diabetic-eye-screening-leaflet

Your guide to diabetic retinopathy
www.gov.uk/government/publications/diabetic-retinopathy-description-in-brief

Closer monitoring and treatment for diabetic retinopathy
www.gov.uk/government/publications/diabetic-retinopathy-monitoring-and-treatment

Easy read guide to diabetic eye screening
www.gov.uk/phe/diabetic-screening-easy-read

Diabetic eye screening: slit lamp examination
www.gov.uk/government/publications/diabetic-eye-screening-slit-lamp-examination

Diabetic eye screening tests during pregnancy
www.gov.uk/government/publications/screening-tests-for-you-and-your-baby/diabetic-eye-screening

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

FAQ - InHealth Group

Diabetes UK

All these NHS diabetic eye screening digital leaflets can be found on GOV.UK at **gov.uk/government/collections/diabetic-eye-screening-information-leaflets/**