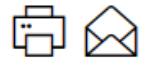








# High Blood Pressure and Eye Disease



Along with causing heart and kidney problems, untreated high blood pressure can also affect your eyesight and lead to eye disease. Hypertension  can cause damage to the blood vessels in the retina, the area at the back of the eye  where images focus. This eye  disease is known as hypertensive retinopathy. The damage can be serious if hypertension  is not treated.

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## What Are the Symptoms of Hypertensive Retinopathy?


A person typically won't experience symptoms of mild to moderate hypertensive retinopathy; it is usually discovered during a routine eye exam. Symptoms of more severe and accelerated hypertension might include headaches and vision  problems.

Severe retinopathy can occur alongside high blood pressure during pregnancy, so prenatal care is important.

## How Is Hypertensive Retinopathy Diagnosed?

An eye  care professional can diagnose hypertensive retinopathy. Using an ophthalmoscope, an instrument that projects light to examine the back of the

eyeball, the doctor will look for signs of retinopathy that include:

- Narrowing of [blood](#)  vessels
- Spots on the retina known as cotton wool spots and exudates
- Swelling of the macula (the central area of the retina) and optic nerve
- Bleeding in the back of the eye

### **How Is Hypertensive Retinopathy Treated?**

The best way to treat hypertensive retinopathy is to adequately control your [blood pressure](#).

### **Can Hypertensive Retinopathy Be Prevented?**

To prevent hypertensive retinopathy, keep your blood pressure under control by reaching and maintaining your optimal [weight](#), sticking with a diet recommended by your physician, [exercising](#) regularly, and faithfully taking your [high blood pressure](#) medications as prescribed. In addition, see your doctor on a regular basis for follow-up care.

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