

Hypertension and Eye Health

ASK YOUR OPTOMETRIST

Hypertension, also called high blood pressure, needs treatment and careful monitoring to prevent damage to your brain, kidneys, heart and eyes. Untreated or uncontrolled hypertension can result in:

- Irreversible damage to your retina (the back of the eye)
- Aneurysms, (bulging blood vessels) that can burst
- Bleeding inside the eye
- Optic neuropathy (damage to the optic nerve)
- Damage to the nerves that control the eye muscles, leading to temporary paralysis or weakness of these muscles.

How does high blood pressure hurt my eyes?

The retina, the area at the back of the eye where images are focused, is composed of many tiny blood vessels that are very fragile. When your blood pressure is too high, the vessels swell and weaken and can bleed or fail to supply enough oxygen to keep the retinal tissue healthy. This damage can be irreversible.

Common signs of vision problems caused by hypertension:

Often, patients will not experience any symptoms or changes in vision until irreversible damage is done. That is why it is so important to have an Optometrist carefully examine the inside of the eye annually to identify problems. In some cases of hypertensive retinopathy, patients may experience headaches and vision problems.

What can I do to prevent damage to my eyes?

- Keep your blood pressure under control
- Take your high blood pressure medications as prescribed
- Have your eyes examined annually by your Optometrist, even if you do not notice any changes in your sight.



Ask your Optometrist for additional information!