



England

# NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme - Extended Screening Intervals

Communications Toolkit

October 2023



# Purpose of toolkit

This toolkit is designed for NHS regional teams, healthcare professionals, stakeholders and charities to support their communications around changes to diabetic eye screening intervals.

It provides background information and assets to support messaging about why the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (DESP) is making changes to how often people are invited for screening.

Please use the materials in this toolkit to increase awareness of the change among your networks by:

- Ensuring relevant health services have this toolkit to support their communications
- Including information in your newsletters
- Amplifying messages and information on social media
- Incorporating messages in internal communications (e.g. email and staff bulletins/intranets)
- Ensuring information on diabetic eye screening is up to date

# Overview of changes

From October 2023 the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (DESP) will start to invite people at lower risk of diabetic retinopathy for screening every 2 years instead of every year.

This change is based on a recommendation by the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) following a large study showing it was safe to invite people in this lower risk group every 2 years.

People eligible for diabetic eye screening who have had two consecutive eye screens, showing no signs of diabetic retinopathy, will start to be offered screening every 2 years. Anyone at higher risk of diabetic retinopathy will continue to receive more regular screening.

While this is a routine screening programme to support good eye health in people with diabetes, anyone that notices any changes to their eyesight should contact their optometrist or optician straight away. They shouldn't wait for their next diabetic eye screening appointment

This change is already in place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



# Programme overview

Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps prevent sight loss. People with diabetes are at risk of eye damage from diabetic retinopathy and screening can detect early signs before any changes to vision are noticed.

The condition occurs when diabetes causes blood vessels in the retina to leak or become blocked, which can affect a person's sight.

## Key facts:

- Everyone with diabetes aged 12 or over is currently invited for diabetic eye screening
- Eye screening is an important part of diabetes care
- Untreated diabetic retinopathy is one of the most common causes of sight loss
- When caught early, treatment is effective at reducing or preventing sight damage
- Diabetic eye screening doesn't look for signs of other eye conditions. People should continue to visit their optician regularly for an eye examination as well
- **3.8 million people** with diabetes in England are invited for screening each year
- It is estimated that **1.3 million people**, will be eligible to be screened every 2 years starting from October 2023
- Find out more about diabetic eye screening on [NHS.UK](#) and [GOV.UK](#)

# Key messages

## NHS Diabetic Eye Screening

- Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss before you notice changes to your vision
- Diabetic eye screening looks for a condition called diabetic retinopathy. This is when diabetes affects the small blood vessels in the retina, at the back of the eye. These blood vessels can leak or become blocked.
- If left untreated, diabetic retinopathy may cause blindness or serious damage to eyesight
- Diabetic eye screening can find changes in the retina before any changes to sight are noticeable
- Getting treatment early can reduce or prevent sight loss
- Diabetic eye screening only looks for retinopathy. It's important that people still go for their regular eye tests too

## Screening interval changes

- Diabetic eye screening is changing for people who are at lower risk of diabetic retinopathy
- If your last two diabetic eye screens found no sign of diabetic retinopathy, you can now be safely screened every 2 years instead of every year
- This change will be phased in from October 2023
- Evidence shows that if no signs of diabetic retinopathy is found, it is safe to be screened every 2 years
- This change has been recommended by the UK National Screening Committee. It has already been made in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- This change only applies to those at the lowest risk of diabetic eye disease. Everyone else will be screened as usual
- While this is a routine screening programme to support good eye health in people with diabetes, anyone that notices any changes to their eyesight should contact their optometrist or optician straight away. They shouldn't wait for their next screening appointment.



# Action for local/regional NHS comms

NHS England is asking Regional/Trust communications teams to assist in cascading key messages through:

- Newsletters/bulletins – a suggested copy template is included in this toolkit. Feel free to use, tailor or create your own versions to issue across local channels if suitable.
- Sharing social media assets highlighting messaging about the interval changes and general diabetic eye screening on your channels.
- Reactive media response (suggested lines further in this pack).
- Sharing resources with colleagues, stakeholders, local communications networks, community organisations for use where appropriate.

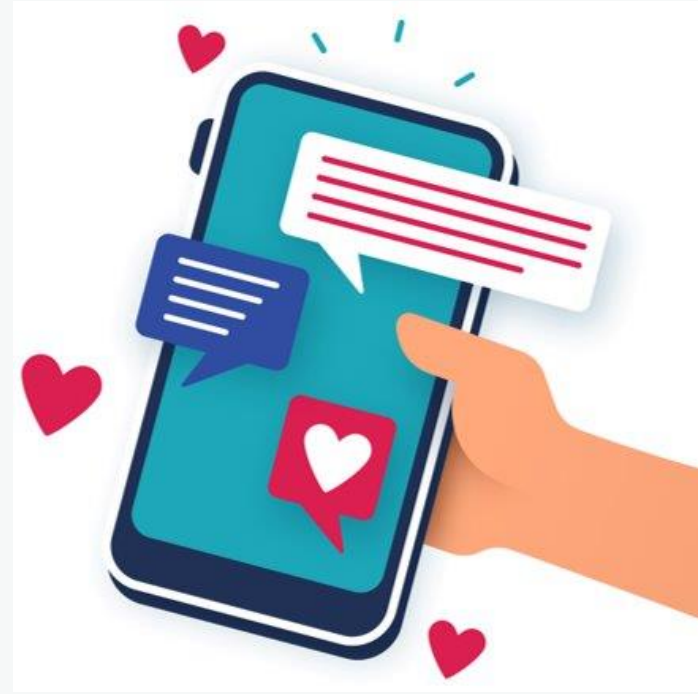
**\*Examples can be found on the [NHS Futures Diabetic Eye Screening page](#).**

# Action for services

NHS England is asking services to assist in promoting the key messages where possible through:

- Sharing social media assets highlighting information about the interval changes and general information on the importance of attending for diabetic eye screening on your channels.
- Displaying posters and promotional material on noticeboards where appropriate.
- Adding design assets to any digital screens in waiting areas.

\***Examples can be found on the [NHS Futures Diabetic Eye Screening page](#).**



# Posters

The poster templates below are available to download [on NHS Futures](#)



## Diabetic eye screening is changing

If your last two diabetic eye screens found no sign of diabetic retinopathy, you will now be invited for screening every 2 years. This follows expert advice.

Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss. Have regular eye tests and consult your optometrist or optician if you notice changes to your eyesight.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening)



Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss before you notice changes to your eyesight.

For more information, visit the NHS website or speak to a healthcare professional.

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Generic diabetic eye screening message – x4

Intervals change message – x4



# Digital display screen assets

The display screen templates below are available to download [on NHS Futures](#)

## Generic diabetic eye screening message – x4

## Intervals change message – x4



People with diabetes at lower risk of diabetic retinopathy now only need to come for their screening every two years.

Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening)

**NHS**

Diabetic eye screening is changing

This digital display screen asset features a woman with dark hair smiling. The text is set against a blue background on the left side of the image. The NHS logo is in the top right corner, and a call to action is in the bottom right corner.



Diabetic eye screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss before you notice changes to your eyesight.

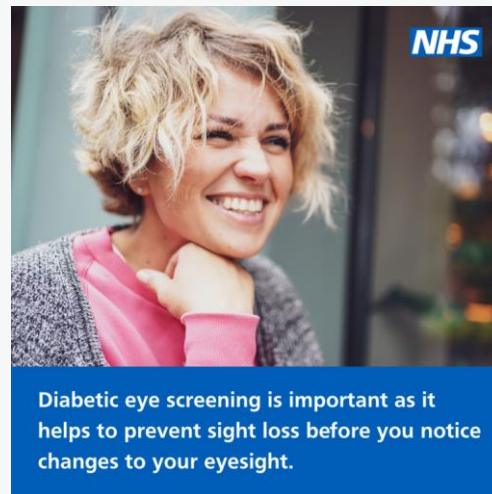
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening)

**NHS**

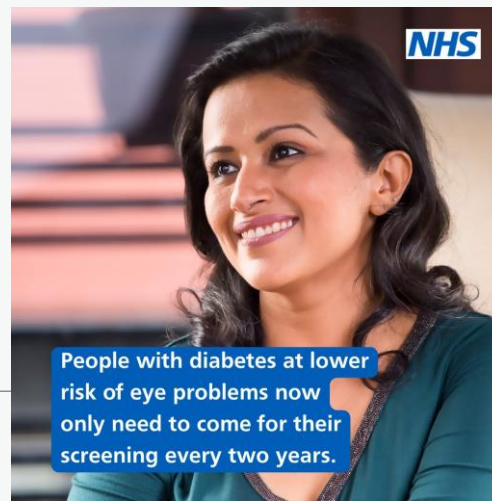
This digital display screen asset features an elderly man with white hair smiling. The text is set against a blue background on the left side of the image. The NHS logo is in the top right corner, and a call to action is in the bottom left corner.

# Social media assets

The social cards below are available to download [on NHS Futures](#)



Generic diabetic eye screening message – x4



Intervals change message – x4

# Example social media posts

To accompany cards linked via the previous slide

## X (formerly known as Twitter)

If you're at lower risk of diabetic retinopathy, expert advice shows it's safe to be screened every 2 years. Diabetic Eye Screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss. Have regular eye tests and consult your optometrist if you notice changes to your eyesight. [nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening) #diabetes

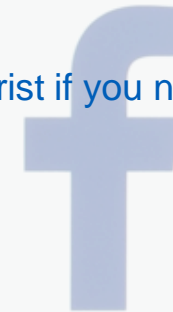


## Facebook

Diabetic eye screening is changing. If you're at lower risk of diabetic retinopathy, expert advice shows it's safe to be screened every 2 years. Anyone at higher risk will continue to be screened more regularly.

Screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss. Have regular eye tests and consult your optometrist if you notice changes to your eyesight.

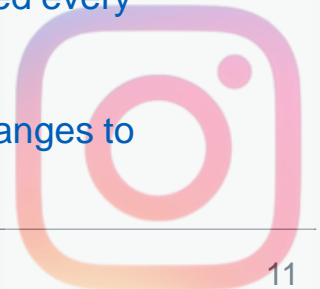
Full details at [nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetic-eye-screening) #diabetes #NHS



## Instagram

Diabetic eye screening is changing. If you're at lower risk of diabetic retinopathy, expert advice shows it's safe to be screened every 2 years. Anyone at higher risk will continue to be screened more regularly.

Screening is important as it helps to prevent sight loss. Have regular eye tests and consult your optometrist if you notice changes to your eyesight. #diabetes #NHS





# Example copy

**This can be used as a basis for bulletins/websites/fact cards/ depending on your activity.**

## NHS diabetic eye screening intervals are changing for people at lower risk

From October 2023 the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (DESP) will start to invite people at lower risk of diabetic retinopathy for screening every 2 years instead of every year.

People eligible for diabetic eye screening who have had two consecutive eye screens showing no signs of diabetic retinopathy will be offered screening every 2 years as it is safe to do so.

This change is based on a recommendation by the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) following a large study showing it was safe to invite people in this lower risk group every 2 years. Extended intervals are already in place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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.

If someone is concerned about changes to their eyesight, they should contact their optometrist or optician straight away.

More information about the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme, can be found at [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk) and [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

# Media lines

**These can be used for basing responses to media enquiries – wider FAQs found [on NHS Futures](#).**

**If asked why this has happened and if it is safe or about cost saving:**

**An NHS spokesperson, said:** “Based on recommendations by the UKNSC (UK National Screening Committee), people in England with diabetes who at lower risk of diabetic retinopathy will now be invited for screening every 2 years instead of every year as it is safe to do so.

“People at higher risk will continue to be screened more regularly and anyone who notices any changes to their eyesight should contact their optometrist or optician straight away.”

Note:

- This change applies to people whose last two diabetic eye screens found no sign of diabetic retinopathy.

# Useful links

Use your own social media channels and create your own posts or like and share social content posted from:

## Social Media Handles

### NHS England

Facebook: [@NHSEngland](#)

X/Twitter: [@NHSEngland](#)

Instagram: [@nhsengland](#)

### Diabetes UK

Facebook: [@diabetesuk](#)

X/Twitter: [@DiabetesUK](#)

Instagram: [@diabetesuk](#)

## Resources

- [Diabetic eye screening - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [Diabetic retinopathy - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [Diabetic eye screening intervals extended for people at lowest risk - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- FAQs on extended screening intervals
- Social media cards
- Posters
- Posters for GP screens

Available on the [NHS Futures Diabetic Eye Screening page](#)