

## **DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA**

The interior of the eye is lined with an important layer of tissue that acts like film in a camera, allowing the eye to see. This layer is known as the retina, and its most sensitive area is called the macula. The macula is the part of the retina that provides you with your sharpest central vision. A healthy macula allows you to see clearly.

When long-standing diabetes damages the delicate blood vessels within the retina, they leak fluid into the surrounding tissues. Sometimes, this happens in the center of the retina and the macula itself becomes swollen. When this occurs, we call the swelling diabetic macular edema.

### **WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA?**

Sometimes the diabetic macular edema begins without any visual symptoms so it is important that you have a careful retina exam each year. Unfortunately, diabetic macular edema is the leading cause of vision loss for many people with diabetes. The vision becomes permanently blurred even with new glasses and many cannot pass a driver's test or read without special assistance.

### **HOW IS DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA DIAGNOSED?**

One of our expert physicians can perform a direct examination of your macula and may recommend further evaluation with various photographic tests such as fluorescein angiography or optical coherence tomography scan to help him or her devise the best possible treatment plan for your eyes.

### **HOW CAN DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA BE TREATED?**

Your doctor may advise that you undergo laser treatment to prevent further loss of vision. Several decades of research have proven that laser cuts the risk of moderate vision loss in half.

### **HOW IS THE LASER TREATMENT PERFORMED?**

Laser treatment is performed in the office closest to your home. Before the surgery, your doctor will dilate your pupil and apply drops to numb the eye. The lights in the office will be dim. As you sit facing the laser machine, your doctor will hold a special lens to your eye. During the procedure, you may see flashes of light but you feel no pain. When finished, expect your vision to be quite blurry for about 10 minutes. This is normal and temporary, however you may notice some burring for the remainder of the day. You will need someone to drive you home after surgery.

### **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR THE DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA TO IMPROVE?**

It usually takes several weeks to a few months for the swelling to subside. Your doctor will decide if more laser is necessary.

## **WHAT IF I ALREADY HAVE VISION LOSS OR MY DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA IS VERY SEVERE?**

Laser is an indispensable tool in the treatment of DME, however some exciting new developments have recently become available to treat more advanced cases. We sometimes now treat diabetic macular edema with medications injected in or around the eye. These medicines are often combined with the laser therapy in more advanced cases of diabetic macular edema. After a careful evaluation, your doctor will decide what therapy or combination of therapies to recommend for your eyes.