

# Changes to the Dorset Diabetic Eye Screening Programme

Information for patients registered with a Dorset GP - November 2006

## Why is the Dorset diabetic eye screening programme changing?

Dorset is joining the new national digital photograph programme. These digital pictures are a permanent record and make it easier to detect diabetic eye disease.

## What is the new system?

This is simply taking photographs of the back of your eyes using a special camera. It does not hurt but the flash is rather bright. Your pupils will still need to be dilated before the pictures are taken.

In Dorset, the service will be provided by trained screeners and optometrists working in the approved optician practices. About 40 optician practices across Dorset are involved.

## When is the new system starting?

All diabetic eye screening must be provided using digital photography from 1 January 2007.

## Will the tests carried out at the opticians be different?

In the old system, the diabetic eye screening test was normally completed at the same time as the NHS sight test. In the new programme, the two tests may be undertaken separately.

## What is checked at an NHS sight test?

The optometrist will test your near and distance vision and assess if you need glasses and then give you the correct lens prescription. You will also have a general examination of the health of your eyes. The pupils are not usually dilated with an NHS sight test. People with diabetes are normally now entitled to a free NHS sight test every two years. This is a change from the previous free annual test. The NHS sight test alone is not robust enough to routinely detect sight threatening diabetic eye disease.

## What is checked at the diabetic eye screening test?

Your distance vision is tested, then drops are used to dilate the pupils and this takes

about 20 minutes. The next step is to take two digital photographs of each eye using the special camera. These photographs are looked at very carefully.

The optometrist may be able to give you a provisional report and in future you will receive a letter within three weeks with the full result.

## What does it mean if the digital photographs are 'ungradeable'?

Ungradeable photographs means the pictures are not clear enough to detect diabetic eye disease. 5-10% of diabetic patients have one or more photographs that are ungradeable. If a clear picture cannot be obtained, a slit lamp examination may need to be undertaken. This may be done at the same appointment.

## What do I do if my usual optician practice is not going to be in the new system?

You should continue to attend your usual practice for diabetic eye screening in 2006. From 2007, you will need to select a different practice for your annual diabetic eye screening test.

There is no reason to change from your usual practice for your NHS sight test, which will normally be every two years. Your current practice will continue to send you a reminder for the NHS sight test.

## How will I know which optician practices are in the new scheme?

A list will be sent with your reminder letter.

## Why is my usual optician not going to be in the new system?

Every optician practice participating in the old scheme had the opportunity to change to the new scheme but for a variety of reasons some practices have chosen not to continue.

## How will I know when to attend?

In the future, you will receive an annual reminder letter with a list of approved optician practices from the central screening

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office. The letter will include a unique PIN number for your eye screening test. Please make sure you tell the optician this number when you book the appointment.

You will need to book your appointment directly with the optician practice in the same way as you do now.

### **How will my name be on the list?**

All patients with diabetes registered with a Dorset GP practice will be automatically included on a central screening list and this will be updated on an ongoing basis. A computer link has been set up to do this.

### **What happens if I move?**

If you move, but are still registered with a Dorset GP (the original one or a new one), your details will be changed automatically on the central list. If you move out of the area, you will need to register with a new GP outside of Dorset and your new practice will give you details of their local diabetes care scheme. You would no longer be eligible for the Dorset scheme.

### **What if I live in Dorset but I am registered with a GP practice that is based in a different county, eg Hampshire, Somerset, Wiltshire?**

Only patients registered with a Dorset GP will be included in the Dorset scheme. Your GP practice or its primary care trust will be able to give you details of your local scheme for diabetic eye screening.

### **What if I am registered with a GP practice that arranges screening using the Salisbury mobile camera?**

This service will continue to be provided by the Salisbury mobile camera.

### **Can the eye screening be done at the hospital?**

If you normally have your eye screening undertaken at the hospital, this will continue until the hospital refers you back to your optician practice. You should still attend your optician for regular NHS sight tests.

### **What happens to the results?**

In future you will receive the result by letter within three weeks of your screening test. Your GP will also be sent the result and the result will be available to your hospital

diabetic clinic consultant. The optometrist may not be able to give you the result immediately as images must be checked before results are issued.

### **What happens if the test shows diabetic eye disease?**

If your optometrist sees signs of diabetic eye disease, the photographs will be checked by a second screener at the hospital. If the signs of diabetic eye disease are present but not threatening your sight, you may need to have photographs taken to monitor the eye changes at a shorter interval than the normal 12 months.

If the signs are confirmed and may be sight threatening, an eye specialist will look at the photographs and, if appropriate, you will be called to an eye clinic. You will receive a letter telling you of the recommendation.

### **Why should I have my eyes screened?**

Untreated diabetic retinopathy is one of the most common causes of blindness in the working-age population.

Diabetic eye disease does not usually affect your sight until the changes are quite advanced. If diabetic eye disease is found at an early stage, you can have laser treatment which is effective at reducing the risk of sight loss.

### **Where can I get further information?**

Your GP, practice nurse, optometrist and hospital clinic will be able to discuss with you any concerns you may have about diabetic eye disease.

The website has further information including frequently asked questions (FAQs) and if you have internet access you may wish to look at this.

There are links from the site to other sites with information about diabetes and diabetic eye screening.

[www.dorsetdiabeticeyescreening.co.uk](http://www.dorsetdiabeticeyescreening.co.uk)

### **How can I contact you?**

The central screening office phone number is 01202 442637.

Alternatively you can write to: Dorset Diabetic Eye Screening Office, Poole Hospital, Longfleet Rd, Poole BH15 2JB or you can contact us through the website above.