

# Changes to the Dorset Diabetic Eye Screening Programme

Information for patients registered with a Dorset GP

May 2006

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

The diabetic eye screening system is being changed nationally to a digital system.

Digital pictures are a permanent record and easily accessible to clinicians providing your health care.

## What is the new system?

In future, digital photography will be the main way of screening for diabetic eye disease. 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 continue to be provided by accredited optometrists in practices across the county. Optometrists are the trained professionals working in the optician practices.

## When is the new system starting?

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

## How will I know when to attend?

In the future, you will be sent an annual reminder letter and a list of participating optician practices from the central screening office.

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

## Is it happening in the same optician practices as the current programme?

Not all practices will choose to continue to take part in the new screening programme. But we expect about 40 practices to join the new programme and we believe there will be acceptable geographical coverage

across the county. There should be a participating practice within a reasonable distance of your home.

## 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 from the list that will be sent with your reminder letter.

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

## 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.

## How will my name be on the list?

All patients with diabetes registered with a Dorset GP practice will be automatically included on the central screening list and this will be updated on an ongoing basis. A computer link is being 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 automatically changed 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 scheme. You would no longer be eligible for the Dorset scheme.

(Cont'd overleaf)

## **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.

## **What if I am housebound or physically unable to sit at a camera in an optometry practice?**

Alternative arrangements are being discussed nationally and we will keep you informed. Continue with your usual method of diabetic eye screening for the present.

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

You will receive the results by letter within three weeks of your screening test. Your GP will be sent the results at the same time as they are sent to you. Your results 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.

## **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 sight tests.

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

If your optometrist sees signs of diabetic eye disease, a second qualified person will check the photographs.

If the signs are confirmed and are sight threatening, an eye specialist will look at the photographs. You will then be called to an eye clinic.

If the signs of diabetic eye disease are present but not threatening your sight, you may need to have more photographs taken to monitor the eye changes at a shorter

interval than the normal 12 months. 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 loss of sight.

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

We will be updating this leaflet as the changes come into effect. Leaflets will be available at GP practices, optometry practices, hospital diabetic centres and pharmacies.

Please let us know if you would like a copy of this leaflet in large print format.

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

A website is being set up which will include 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 will be operational from June 2006 but until then a message can be left on 01202 xxxxxx and a member of the project team will ring you back. Alternatively you can write to

**Dorset Diabetic Eye Screening Office**  
c/o Poole Hospital,  
Longfleet Road, Poole BH15 2JB

or you can contact us through the website above.