

Diabetic Retinopathy Virtual Clinic

Information for patients

What is diabetic retinopathy?

Diabetes can affect the blood vessels at the back of the eye (retina), causing the vessels to leak and block which can significantly reduce vision. Diabetic retinopathy if left untreated may lead to sight loss, hence the importance of screening for retina changes.

What is the virtual clinic?

The diabetic retinopathy virtual clinic enables the eye specialist to assess a patient's diabetic eye disease and plan the most appropriate next steps for each individual. It is called a "virtual" clinic because the patient will not be seen by a doctor, but will have images of the back of their eyes taken to be later reviewed by the doctor.

If there is little or no disease, patients will not require a further hospital visit and will be discharged back to the community to resume yearly screening.

Patients at low risk of developing severe disease will continue virtual screening at the hospital.

Patients at high risk of developing severe disease will be seen in the eye clinic by a doctor in a timely fashion.

Intended benefits of virtual clinics

- Improves initial waiting times for patients referred with diabetic eye disease
- Provides timely imaging of patients' eyes
- Reduces any unnecessary clinic appointments
- Individual management plans are set up to meet the needs of each patient after review of their images by a specialist
- Ensures early treatment for proliferative disease (severe)

What is involved in a virtual clinic appointment?

- Please come to the Outpatient Eye Department
 - Your vision will be assessed and drops instilled by a nurse
 - A picture of the back of your eye, which is called an OCT scan, will be taken by a technician
 - An OCT scan takes approximately five minutes
 - You can then go home
 - A Specialist Consultant will review the images and all other information after the clinic
 - Diabetic eye disease can be graded from these images
 - You will either be brought back for further investigation, treatment, follow-up in an ophthalmology clinic or you will be discharged to be followed-up in the community
 - **Please note: Patients will not see a doctor during the virtual clinic appointment**
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Is any special preparation required?

Please note that your pupils will be dilated during this appointment, therefore you will **not be able to drive** for at least four hours after this. If you are not planning to use public transport please ensure that you have arranged for someone to drive you home.

What should I do if I can't attend an appointment?

Please contact the Ophthalmology Department on ☎ 01622 228218 and let us know as soon as possible if you can't attend an appointment

MTW NHS Trust is committed to making its patient information accessible in a range of languages and formats. If you need this leaflet in another language or format please ask one of your clinical care team or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We will do our best to arrange this.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

Telephone: ☎ 01622 224960 or ☎ 01892 632953

Email: mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net

or visit their office at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: www.mtw.nhs.uk or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

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