

14 Nov 2025 at the Hotel Ashok, New Delhi



We proudly launched the Guidelines on the Management of Diabetic Retinopathy in India, originally introduced in 2015 on the World Diabetes Day

After its revision now in 2025 nearly a decade later, a common question was raised:

What has changed in the new guidelines?

This is indeed a critical question. With the support of a team of experts, we were able to highlight key advancements and updates:

Earlier, diabetic retinopathy (DR) screening was not routinely conducted at the primary eye care level. With the introduction of advanced technologies—including AI-enabled fundus cameras—the new guidelines now recommend that DR screening be carried out at primary health centres. This shift is expected to significantly increase screening coverage, with the goal of reaching **80% of people living with diabetes**, compared to the current coverage of approximately **10%**. This marks a major step toward early detection and prevention of vision loss.

Screening should begin immediately upon the diagnosis of diabetes, rather than waiting for symptoms to appear. The guidelines emphasise the importance of **annual follow-up screenings** for every individual with diabetes, as regular monitoring is critical for detecting early changes in the retina and initiating timely treatment before complications arise.

Public awareness has been given greater emphasis in the updated guidelines. There is a strong need to inform communities that diabetes does not only impact blood sugar levels but can also severely affect vision, potentially leading to blindness. The guidelines highlight that every person with diabetes must undergo regular DR screening, and that awareness campaigns should be strengthened across health systems and communities to reinforce this message.

Lifestyle modifications and improved diabetes management—such as maintaining healthy blood sugar levels, eating a balanced diet, engaging in regular physical activity, and adhering to medication—are encouraged to reduce the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy. These preventive measures play a crucial role in delaying or avoiding early complications associated with diabetes, and the guidelines place renewed focus on promoting them as part of holistic diabetes care.

DR screening should only be conducted in centres where both diagnostic and treatment facilities are available. This ensures that individuals who test positive for retinal changes can receive the appropriate care without delay. The guidelines also call for the establishment of **clear and efficient referral pathways**, enabling seamless coordination between primary, secondary, and tertiary health facilities. This is essential to ensure that all identified cases receive timely diagnosis, follow-up, and treatment, ultimately preventing avoidable blindness.

The 2025 National Guidelines stand as a vital milestone in our collective journey toward eliminating avoidable vision loss from diabetic retinopathy. With this unified framework, India moves closer to a future where no one loses sight because of diabetes—a goal that embodies the vision and values of VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India. We want to congratulate and acknowledge the contribution of each of the experts (listed below) without whom this manual wouldn't have been revised.

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Vision 2020: The Right to Sight - India