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*Diabetic retinopathy is a leading cause of blindness. It occurs when diabetes damages tiny blood vessels inside the retina (the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye). There may be an association between the use of vitamin C and E supplements and a reduced risk of diabetic retinopathy.*

## VITAMIN C AND E SUPPLEMENTS LOWER DIABETIC RETINOPATHY RISK



Normal vision



Same scene viewed by a person with diabetic retinopathy

*Image courtesy NIH National Eye Institute*

A study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* examined 1,353 type 2 diabetics who were diagnosed from 1993 to 1995. Data from these subjects revealed no association of diabetic retinopathy with vitamins C and E from food alone, but a **decreased** risk was found among those who reported long-term (> 3 years) use of vitamin C or E or multivitamin supplements. Compared to those who did not report supplement use, long-term supplement users experienced a two-fold reduction in the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy.

Although there had previously been evidence of this association from *in vitro*, animal, and short-term research, this was the first epidemiologic study on retinopathy to show the same protective effect associated with supplemental vitamin C and vitamin E.

< *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Vol. 79, No. 5, 865-873, May 2004 >