

AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (AMD)

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of severe vision loss in people over age 50 in the USA. This eye disease occurs when there are changes to the macula, a small portion of the retina that is located on the inside back layer of the eye. AMD is a loss of central vision that can occur in two forms: “dry” or atrophic and “wet” or exudative.

Who’s at Risk?

- Whites are at higher risk for developing AMD than other races
- Women also develop AMD at an earlier age than men

Symptoms:

- Gradual loss of the ability to see objects clearly
- Objects appear distorted in shape and straight lines look wavy or crooked
- Loss of clear color vision
- A dark or empty area appears in the center of vision

Diagnosis: In its early stages, you may not even notice any signs of macular degeneration; if you notice any of these signs/symptoms, you should contact your doctor of optometry immediately. In a comprehensive eye exam, your optometrist performs a variety of tests to determine if you have macular degeneration or any other eye health problems.

Treatment: In the “dry” form of the disease, the tissue of the macula gradually becomes thin and stops functioning properly. There is no cure for dry AMD, and any loss in central vision cannot be restored. However, doctors now believe there is a link between nutrition and the progression of dry AMD.

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Dietary changes favoring low-fat content and dark green leafy vegetables can slow vision loss, and nutritional supplements may be beneficial. Low vision devices such as telescopic and microscopic lenses, magnifying glasses, illuminated magnifiers and closed-circuit television systems can often be prescribed to maximize remaining vision and restore function.

Less common, “wet” macular degeneration results when fluids leak from newly formed blood vessels under the macula and blur central vision. Vision loss from this can be rapid and severe. If detected early, the wet form can be treated with laser treatment called photocoagulation. A highly focused beam of light seals the leaking blood vessels that damage the macula. Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) uses a medication injected into the bloodstream, which is then activated with a laser into the eye. Other therapies, where a medication is injected into the back of the eye, can also be effective. These are not permanent cures but are used to slow the rate of central vision loss.

Dry Macular Degeneration

