

MACULAR DEGENERATION

March is Save Your Vision Month

More Than 200,000 Americans Are Diagnosed With Macular Degeneration Each Year

Macular Degeneration (AMD) is a progressive disease caused by either the deterioration of the central portion of the retina or leaky blood vessels under the retina. The retina's central portion, the macula, controls our ability to read, drive, recognize faces and see objects in fine detail. AMD affects more than 10 million Americans and is more common than cataracts and glaucoma combined.

In an effort to raise awareness of this condition and to promote general vision health, the following guide has been prepared, summarizing the cause of Macular Degeneration, its symptoms, and treatment options.

01 | Cause

The exact cause of Macular Degeneration is unknown; however, both hereditary and environmental elements are suspected. Studies have shown that Caucasians are more likely to develop the disease than other ethnicities and smoking doubles the risk of AMD. There are two main types of Macular Degeneration:

- **Dry:** Characterized by the presence of yellow deposits in the macula. Blind spots occur in the center of vision, and in advanced stages patients lose central vision.
- **Wet:** The growth of abnormal blood vessels under the macula portion of the retina leaks blood and fluid, causing blurred vision and blind spots. The leakage forms scarring, resulting in permanent loss of central vision.

02 | Symptoms

The symptoms of AMD are subtle, and typically begin with a dim, blurry spot in the middle of your vision. Color perception may also become weakened. If you experience either of these symptoms, consult an Ophthalmologist as soon as possible.

03 | Diagnosis & Treatment

AMD can be detected during a routine eye exam. Your eye specialist will notice tiny yellow deposits under the retina when examining the eyes. The physician may also recommend an angiography (OCT) to look for leaky blood vessels behind the eye.

Although there is no cure for AMD, with early diagnosis and proper treatment, the progression of the disease can be managed. Some options include:

- **Anti-angiogenesis (anti-VEGF) drugs:** These drugs reduce the level of proteins that stimulate blood vessel growth in the retina and macula and are administered by injection. Patients have reported regaining lost vision after anti-VEGF treatment.
- **Laser Therapy:** High-energy laser can destroy actively growing blood vessels causing vision loss.
- **Photodynamic Laser Therapy:** This is a two-step treatment including a light-sensitive drug and cold laser to activate the drug, destroying the abnormal blood vessels.

04 | Conclusion

If you are exhibiting symptoms of AMD or have been recently diagnosed, speak with your eye specialist about what the best treatment option is for you as well as what lifestyle changes can slow the progression of the disease.

To learn more about AMD, please visit:

<http://www.eyesight.org/>

Did You Know?

Macular Degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss

References

<http://www.webmd.com/eye-health/macular-degeneration/age-related-macular-degeneration-overview?page=4>