



# How well *do* you see?

## About Age-related Macular Degeneration

### What is age-related macular degeneration?

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a common eye condition and a leading cause of vision loss among people age 60 and older.<sup>1</sup> AMD causes damage to the macula, a small spot near the center of the retina responsible for sharp, central vision, allowing people to see objects straight ahead.<sup>2</sup>

By itself, AMD does not lead to complete blindness. However, loss of central vision can interfere with everyday activities, such as the ability to recognize faces, drive, read, or do activities such as cooking or fixing things around the house, or those that involve fine detail.<sup>3</sup> There are two types of AMD – “wet” and “dry.”<sup>4</sup>

- **Dry AMD** is the most common type of macular degeneration and affects 90% of people with the condition.<sup>5</sup> With dry AMD, cells within the macula gradually become thin or break down, which is known as atrophy. Dry AMD slowly reduces central vision and can affect color perception, and can even cause severe vision loss.<sup>4,5</sup> Dry AMD can affect one or both eyes. Vision loss may go unnoticed if only one eye is affected. This is because the unaffected eye may compensate for vision loss in the other eye.<sup>6</sup>
- **Wet AMD** is less common, but it can cause more damage to central vision compared to dry AMD.<sup>6</sup> It occurs when fluids leak from blood vessels under the macula, blurring central vision, and causing rapid and severe vision loss.<sup>4</sup> Symptoms for wet AMD generally appear and progress quickly.<sup>6</sup>

### What are the causes and risk factors for AMD?

Age is a major risk factor for AMD and is more likely to occur after age 60. Additional risk factors include smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, family history of the disease and race.<sup>2</sup>

### What are the symptoms of AMD and how is it diagnosed?

As AMD progresses, loss of central vision is a common symptom. Over time, the blurred area may grow larger or blank spots may appear. However, dry and wet AMD can each have different symptoms.<sup>6</sup> Dry AMD Symptoms include blurred vision, loss or blurriness of central vision, the need for increased lighting for near vision, colors appearing faded and less vivid, hazy vision, difficulty recognizing faces, and difficulty seeing when going from bright to low light.<sup>6</sup>

Wet AMD Symptoms include loss of central vision, dark or blank spots that appear, distorted vision (such as straight line appearing crooked), colors appearing faded or less vivid, and the size of objects appearing different for each eye.<sup>6</sup>



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AMD is diagnosed through a comprehensive eye exam.<sup>3</sup> The most important thing you can do to protect your vision is to have yearly eye examinations.<sup>1</sup> Those already diagnosed with AMD should notify their eye care professional immediately if any changes in their vision are noticed.<sup>1</sup>

## What are treatment options for AMD?

Unfortunately, there is no proven treatment for dry AMD. However, study has shown that vitamins C, E, beta-carotene, zinc and copper may reduce the impact of dry AMD by slowing the progression towards more advanced stages of the disease.<sup>1</sup> There are several treatment options available for wet AMD, which can generally reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of severe vision loss.<sup>6</sup>

- **Anti-VEGF medication injections:** Medications injected in the eye can block the development of new vessels and leakage from the abnormal vessels. Many patients have regained vision that was lost through this treatment.
- **Laser therapy:** A high-energy laser light can sometimes be used to destroy actively growing, abnormal blood vessels to prevent further leakage and bleeding.
- **Photodynamic therapy:** A combination of a light-activated drug called a photosensitizer and a low-power, cool laser can be used to target the center of the macula. The photosensitizer drug is injected into the bloodstream and is absorbed by the abnormal blood vessels in the eye. This is followed by a cold laser, which activates the drug, closing off and damages unwanted blood vessels.

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