

Age related macular degeneration



Normal vision



Macular degeneration simulation

What is age related macular degeneration?

Age related macular degeneration is a degenerative eye condition caused by changes at the back of the eye (retina). It is the leading cause of severe vision impairment in people aged over 40 years in Australia. It is also referred to as AMD or ARMD.

Which part of the eye is affected?

AMD affects the macular region of the retina which is responsible for central vision. Activities which rely on the macula functioning well are reading, writing, close-work and watching TV.

What are the types of AMD?

AMD is described as either dry or wet. Dry AMD results in a gradual loss of central vision and wet AMD leads to a sudden loss of central vision. Dry AMD can turn wet and subsequently result in sudden vision loss. Regular visits to an eye specialist are highly recommended.

What are the common symptoms?

- A gradual or sudden decline in the ability to see objects clearly
- Difficulty reading – that is not improved with new glasses
- Distorted vision in the central field and difficulty seeing people's faces clearly
- Dimming of colour vision
- Visual hallucinations (see Charles Bonnet Syndrome)

Who is at risk?

Those most at risk of developing AMD are people with a family history of AMD, people over the age of 75 and smokers.

Can AMD be treated?

Treatments are available for wet AMD and are aimed at maintaining the vision for as long as possible. In some cases, vision may improve. The desired outcome is to prevent the growth of new abnormal blood vessels in the retina.

Dry AMD treatments are not yet readily available to the general public.

However, a healthy diet rich in antioxidants and regular exercise is important in reducing the risk of macular degeneration and in slowing the progression of the disease.

Antioxidants are very important for the eyes and are found in a wide variety of vitamins and minerals such as Omega-3 (salmon, mackerel, trout and sardines), vitamin C (citrus fruits, berries, kiwi, tomatoes and capsicum), Lutein and Zeaxanthin (dark leafy vegetables-kale, spinach, broccoli, silver beet, pumpkin, peas, corn and beans), zinc (seafood), vitamin E (nuts and seeds) and selenium (brazil nuts, mushrooms, oats and brown rice).

Some eye specialists recommend vitamin supplements to reduce the progression of dry AMD. It is best to discuss this directly with your eye specialist.

Your eye specialist can also show you how to monitor your vision in each eye with an Amsler grid. It is very important to contact your eye specialist if any changes in vision are noticed or detected on the Amsler grid for potential sight saving treatment.

How can Vision Australia help?

Vision Australia provides support and services to people of all ages and stages of life who are blind or have vision loss.

We work with people to achieve what's important to them such as studying, finding or retaining employment, leading an active social life or continuing to do the things they love.

With the support of our professional teams, people who are blind or have low vision can develop their skills and make use of technology and equipment that will enable them to live independently.

Contact Vision Australia

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