



What is Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)?

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a leading cause of vision loss in adults over the age of 50. AMD causes damage to a small part of the retina responsible for central vision called the macula. When damage to the macula occurs, it typically causes loss of central, detailed vision which results in difficulty with tasks such as reading, driving, threading a needle, or recognizing faces.



<https://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/amd.htm>

Types of AMD

Dry: The most common form of macular degeneration is Dry AMD, this type represents about 80% of diagnosed cases. It is caused by the appearance of small, yellow deposits called 'drusen' under the macula, the part of the retina responsible for detailed vision. A build up of these drusen can lead to macular degeneration. This form of AMD usually progresses very gradually, sometimes without symptoms until later stages.

Wet: Wet AMD occurs due to formation of new tiny, weak blood vessels under and around the macula. Due to their fragile nature, these blood vessels can break, and then leak or bleed into the macula, causing scarring and loss of vision. Wet AMD usually presents more rapidly, advancing to serious vision loss.

What Causes AMD? What are the Risk Factors?

The cause of AMD is not clearly understood at this time. There are, however, some known risk factors, such as:

- » Family history of AMD
- » Aging: predominantly occurs in those over 65
- » Race: Caucasians have a higher incidence of AMD
- » Sex: females are affected at a greater rate (perhaps due to living longer)
- » Light colored eyes
- » Smoking
- » High blood pressure



What Causes AMD? What are the Risk Factors? (continued)

- » High cholesterol
- » Obesity
- » High sun exposure
- » Poor diet

Symptoms of AMD

- » Central vision becomes blurry at first, sometimes progressing to a total loss of central vision
- » Straight lines look 'wavy'
- » Colors, particularly pastels, become harder to distinguish from one another
- » Seeing in dim light becomes more difficult

Are There Treatments for Age Related Macular Degeneration?

At this time, there is no cure for this eye condition. However, there are ways to slow down its progression, as well as healthy living choices which can make a difference in the speed of the progression of the condition.

- » **Healthy lifestyle:** avoid smoking, exercise regularly, keep blood pressure and cholesterol well controlled, prevent exposure to UV light, eat a well-balanced diet filled with leafy greens, fish, and avoiding processed foods. All lifestyle and diet changes should be discussed with your doctor prior to the modifications.
- » **Supplements:** A large study, Age Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS and AREDS II), found that a combination of vitamins and minerals (lutein, zeaxanthin, zinc, copper and vitamins C and E) can slow down the progression of Dry AMD in SOME patients; ask your doctor if an AREDS-type supplement might be worthwhile for you.
- » **Injections:** commonly used to treat wet AMD by injecting anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (anti-VEGF) drugs, directly into the eye. These injections slow down the development of new blood vessels in the retina, thereby reducing further scarring and loss of vision.
- » **Lasers:** occasionally used to treat wet AMD to destroy the new, rogue blood vessels, to stop the leakage into the retina.



The Bottom Line

While there is currently no cure for Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD), there are ways to live with it successfully and learn new techniques to live fulfilling and independent lives. Some of these tips may include:

- » Use of high-powered magnification for reading tasks
- » Increased 'task' lighting when reading or performing other detailed activities
- » Increased use of contrasting colors around the home, to make key areas and items 'stand out' from the background

**For more information on living with vision loss, contact
Lighthouse Low Vision Services at: (206) 436-2154
OR
bit.ly/LighthouseLVS**

References:

American Academy of Ophthalmology:

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/amd-macular-degeneration>

National Eye Institute:

https://nei.nih.gov/health/maculardegen/armd_facts



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