

# AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION

What is Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)?

The retina is a layer of light sensitive cells that line the back layer of the eye. The macula is in the centre of the retina where the light comes into focus and is required for seeing fine details clearly. It typically affects patients over 50 and becomes increasingly more common with age.

Symptoms

As the macula becomes damaged it begins to affect your central vision and ability to see fine details for close up and distance. Symptoms of this condition include:

- Problems reading small print even with your reading glasses
- Straight lines may look distorted or wavy
- Central blur in vision

Types of AMD

Dry AMD

This is the more common type which develops secondary to a build-up of waste material under the macula. This condition develops very slowly and patients vision may be unaffected or experience slight visual loss. A minority of patients may progress into a more advanced stage of dry AMD with geographic atrophy, where vision is lost through loss of macula tissue or may develop wet AMD.

Wet AMD

In this condition abnormal blood vessels grow underneath the macula. These unhealthy vessels leak blood and fluid. Eventually the bleeding and scarring can lead to severe permanent loss of central vision.

## **Treatment for AMD**

### Dry AMD

There is no treatment for dry AMD. There is some evidence that high doses of vitamin A, C, E and the minerals zinc and copper when taken together may help slow down the progression of dry AMD. A balanced diet with fresh fruit and green leafy vegetables and not smoking is good for your general health and may also help your eye health.

### Wet AMD

I provide intravitreal injections (injections into the eye) for wet AMD. These injections are anti-vascular endothelial growth factor agents (anti-VEGF). When injected into the eye on a regular basis, can stop the abnormal blood vessels growing, leaking and bleeding under the retina with an aim of stabilising vision.

Please refer to the intravitreal anti-VEFG treatment leaflet for more information.

## **Practical Help**

It is important to remember that AMD does not lead to total blindness, although your central vision will become increasingly blurred, your peripheral vision (side vision) should remain less affected.

To make the most of your remaining vision you could use angle poise lamps or brighter light bulbs, large print books and magnifiers can aid reading, which your local Low Visual Aid clinic could provide. The Macular Society can also provide eccentric view training which is a technique of reading using an area in your peripheral field when you have central vision loss.

Depending on your level of vision you could be registered sight or severely sight impaired which would entitle you to additional help such as a disabled parking badge, reduced television license fees or rent rebates. Local social services should also be able to offer you information on staying safe in your home and getting out and about safely.

Being diagnosed with an eye condition can be very upsetting. Should you want to talk about your condition with other individuals affected with AMD or with support groups then The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) have a telephone helpline and emotional support service and their website provides lots of practical information. The Macular Society has local groups which meet throughout the country and also offer a telephone counseling service.

### Useful Contacts

Macular Society  
PO Box 1870,  
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Tel: 0300 3030 111  
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