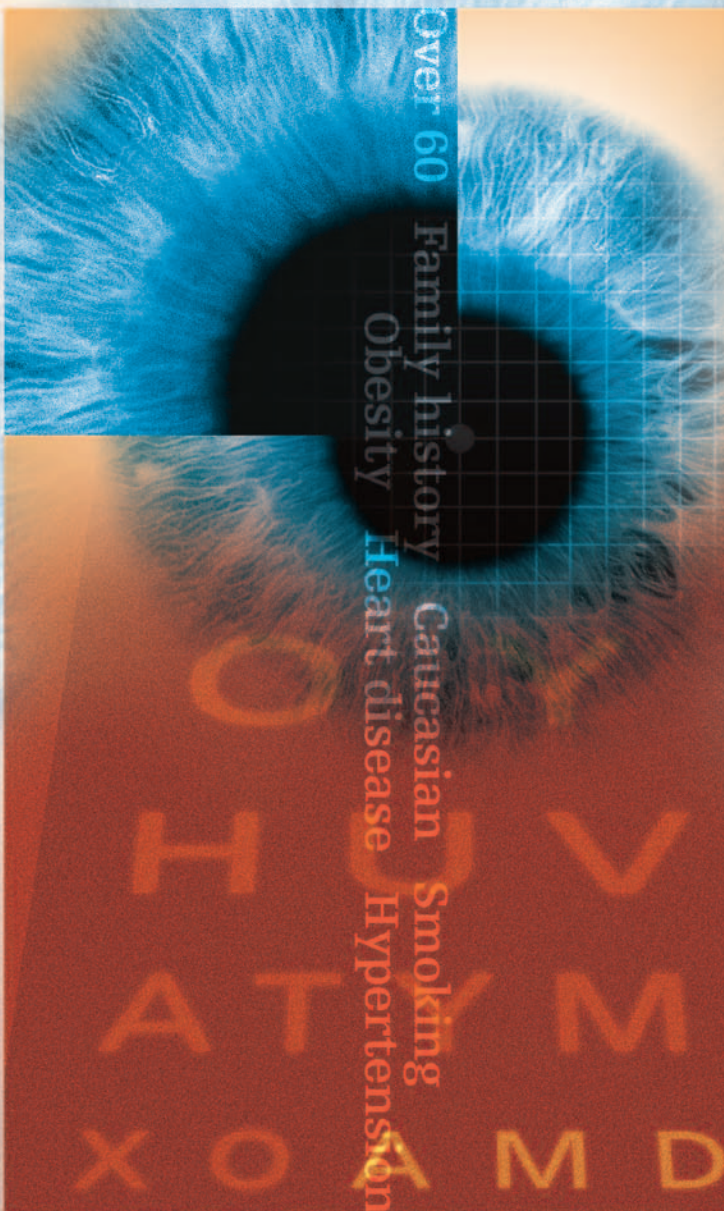


Don't Get Blind-sided by Age-related Macular Degeneration



Over 60

Family history

Caucasian

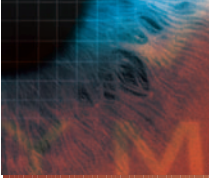
Smoking

Obesity

Heart disease

Hypertension

Y U V T X C



Don't Get Blind-sided by Age-related Macular Degeneration

1 When we think of eye conditions that affect our
2 vision, many of us have heard about glaucoma
3 or cataracts. Very few people, however, are
4 familiar with age-related macular degeneration
5 (AMD)—a leading cause of vision loss in people
6 over age 60. Because scientists have not yet
7 found a cure for the disease, it is important that
8 you learn as much as possible about AMD and
9 how to protect your eyesight.

3 What is AMD and how does it affect my vision?

4 AMD is a serious disease that may result in loss of
5 central vision. The exact cause is not known. It occurs
6 when there is damage to the macula, the part of the
7 eye that allows you to see fine detail. AMD does not
8 affect peripheral, or side, vision. Although people
9 rarely go totally blind from the disease, AMD can make
10 it difficult to read, write, drive, or perform other
11 normal daily tasks.

6 ***AMD is a leading cause of vision loss
in people over age 60.***

There are two kinds of AMD: “dry” and “wet.” **Dry AMD** affects about 90 percent of patients with AMD. It usually develops slowly, so people may not notice any change in their vision right away. Both eyes may or may not be affected. A common early sign of dry AMD is the formation of yellow deposits, called drusen, under the macula.

Dry AMD can sometimes turn into wet AMD. **Wet AMD** affects only 10 percent of AMD patients, but it is responsible for 90 percent of all severe vision loss from the disease. It occurs when abnormal blood vessels develop and leak blood and fluid under the macula, causing damage that leads to rapid loss of central vision.

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AMD Risk Factors

- Older age (over age 60)
- Family history
- Caucasian
- Smoking
- Obesity
- Heart disease
- Hypertension

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Does AMD have any symptoms?

AMD can start out without symptoms, and neither the dry nor wet form of the disease causes pain. There are, however, some warning signs that you should keep in mind. If you notice any of these symptoms, contact your eye care professional immediately:

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Symptoms of Dry AMD

- Blurred or distorted vision
- Need for more light when reading
- Difficulty recognizing faces from a distance
- Blurred or blank spot in the center of vision

Symptoms of Wet AMD

- Straight lines may appear wavy
- Rapid loss of central vision
- Blurred or blank spot in the center of vision

How can I find out if I have AMD?

Having regular comprehensive eye exams is the best way to catch AMD early and to preserve your vision. To look for signs of AMD, your eye care professional will use eye drops to dilate (enlarge) your pupils, allowing a better view of the back of the eye. You may be asked to view a checkerboard pattern called an Amsler grid. Early changes in your central vision will cause the lines in the grid to appear distorted or missing, which is a sign of AMD.

Having regular comprehensive eye exams is the best way to catch AMD early and to preserve your vision.

What can be done to treat AMD?

There is currently no cure for dry AMD. Because vision loss occurs slowly, however, many people with this form of AMD are able to lead normal, active lives—especially if it only affects one eye. The National Eye Institute has sponsored a 10-year study called the Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS), which has shown that a combination of antioxidant nutrients and zinc reduces the risk of vision loss and progression of AMD by about 25 percent in patients with more advanced dry AMD. Be sure to ask your eye care professional if you would be a good candidate for antioxidant/zinc therapy.

Some cases of wet AMD may be treated with laser surgery. These treatments cannot restore lost vision, but they can help prevent further vision deterioration:

- **Laser photocoagulation:** A laser is used to destroy the abnormal blood vessels under the retina. Because heat from the laser can also destroy overlying healthy tissue, this treatment is most useful if the abnormal blood vessels are not in the center of the macula. Often several treatments are needed.

- **Photodynamic therapy:** More patients are eligible for this treatment than laser photocoagulation, and it causes less damage to retinal tissue. The treatment involves injecting a light-activated drug into the bloodstream, where it travels to and collects in the abnormal blood vessels. A non-thermal laser is then used to activate the drug. It produces a reaction that closes the abnormal vessels without causing damage to the overlying retina.

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Are scientists looking for new treatments?

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Several clinical trials are underway to find new and more effective treatments for wet AMD. Although still in the experimental stage, the following treatments show promise:

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- **Transpupillary thermal therapy (TTT)** uses a low intensity thermal laser to potentially treat abnormal blood vessels with minimal damage to the retina.
- **Submacular surgery** involves the surgical removal of abnormal blood vessels.
- **Macular translocation** involves detaching the retina and relocating it to a healthier spot in the eye.
- **Feeder vessel therapy** involves the identification and treatment of arteries that feed blood to abnormal blood vessels.
- **Pharmacological (anti-angiogenesis) therapy** uses drugs to potentially inhibit the growth of abnormal blood vessels.

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Take Steps to Protect Your Eyesight

- Be aware of the symptoms of AMD, especially if you are over age 60 or have any other risk factors.
- Have annual comprehensive eye exams. This is the best way to catch AMD in its earliest stages, as well as other age-related eye conditions like glaucoma or cataracts.
- Be alert to any changes in your vision, and report them to your eye care professional as soon as possible.
- Make lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of AMD. Don't smoke, maintain normal blood pressure, get regular exercise and watch your weight. Medical experts also recommend eating a healthy diet that includes leafy green vegetables and fish.

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Where can I get more information about AMD?

The following organizations can provide additional information about AMD, as well as special services available to AMD patients.

AMD Alliance International

1929 Bayview Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4G 3E8
Canada
1-877-263-7171 (toll-free in
US and Canada)
(416) 480-7505
www.amdalliance.org

American Academy of Ophthalmology

P.O. Box 7424
San Francisco, CA 94120-7424
(415) 561-8500
www.aao.org

American Optometric Association

243 Lindbergh Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63141
(314) 991-4100
www.aoanet.org

Association for Macular Diseases

210 East 64th Street
New York, NY 10021
(212) 605-3719
www.macula.org

Foundation Fighting Blindness

11435 Cronhill Drive
Owings Mills, MD 21117-2220
1-800-683-5555
(410) 568-0150
www.FightBlindness.org

Macular Degeneration Partnership

8733 Beverly Boulevard
Suite 201
Los Angeles, CA 90048
1-888-430-9898
(310) 423-6455
www.amd.org

National Eye Institute

31 Center Drive MSC 2510
Bethesda, MD 20892-2510
(301) 496-5248
www.nei.nih.gov

Prevent Blindness America

500 East Remington Road
Schaumburg, IL 60173
1-800-331-2020
(847) 843-2020
www.preventblindness.org

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