

# Age-Related Macular Degeneration

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a chronic eye disease associated with aging that gradually destroys sharp, central vision. It is one of the leading causes of legal blindness and vision impairment in older Americans.

Macular degeneration affects the central vision, but not the peripheral vision - therefore, it doesn't cause total blindness. The progression of AMD can be slow or rapid, but the deterioration of central vision generally occurs over a period of a few years. Pain is not associated with AMD, but if you experience any of the following, see your Eye M.D. right away:

- **Straight lines appear wavy**
- **Difficulty seeing at a distance**
- **Decreased ability to distinguish colors**
- **Inability to see details, such as faces or words in a book**
- **Dark or empty spots block the center of your vision**

Although the exact cause of macular degeneration is unknown, several studies have shown the following individuals may be at risk:

- **People age 50 and older**
- **People with hypertension**
- **People who smoke**
- **People with a family history of AMD**

The "dry" form of macular degeneration occurs in approximately 90 percent of those with AMD. Studies have found that high levels of zinc and antioxidants play a key role in slowing the progression of dry macular degeneration in advanced cases.

The "wet" form occurs in only 10 percent of those with AMD, but it accounts for 90 percent of all severe vision loss from the disease. "Wet" AMD can be treated with conventional laser treatment and photodynamic therapy. PDT is used to reduce the risk of moderate to severe vision loss in patients with a few specific forms of "wet" macular degeneration. A new treatment of intraocular antineovascular injections is on the horizon. These drugs, which are delivered directly into the eye by injection, block VEGF (vascular endothelial growth factor), the molecule that promotes the growth of abnormal blood vessels in "wet" macular degeneration. Other experimental treatments include transplanting healthy cells into a diseased retina and inserting a "retinal chip" to restore vision loss.

Early detection and treatment is the best defense against losing your vision. If you are at risk for macular degeneration, see your Eye M.D. for a complete eye exam at least every one to two years. If your vision has been reduced, you do not have to live a lonely and isolating life. Low vision rehabilitation resources are available to help you preserve your quality of life and maintain maximum independence. See your Eye M.D. for these resources.

*See your Eye M.D. ... because there's so much more to see.*

**An Eye M.D.** is an ophthalmologist - a medical doctor who provides the full spectrum of eye and vision care. From eyeglasses and contact lenses to medication and surgery, your Eye M.D. will help you keep your sight for life.

*AMD is the leading cause of visual impairment for people age 50 and older*

For more information or to find an Eye M.D., visit [www.aaopt.org](http://www.aaopt.org)