

MACULAR DEGENERATION...



**UNDERSTANDING IS
THE FIRST STEP TOWARD
PROTECTING YOUR VISION**



KNOWLEDGE IS GOOD MEDICINE

Finding out that you have macular degeneration is just the beginning. Now it is important to understand the disease, so you can do everything you can to help preserve your sight.

This booklet will give you information to help you work with your eye doctor, so you can keep doing the things you love for as long as possible.

MANY PEOPLE HAVE MACULAR DEGENERATION

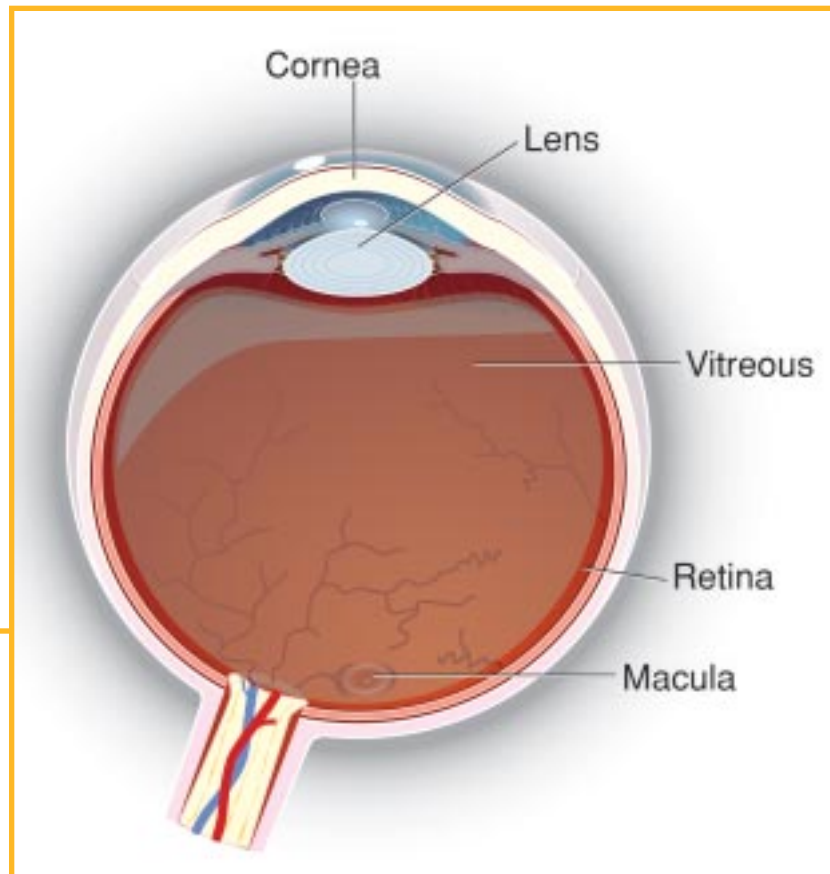
Macular degeneration is the #1 cause of severe vision loss in people over age 50. Because it occurs mostly in older people, it is often called age-related macular degeneration, or AMD. People from all walks of life have this condition.

Today, about 15 million people in the United States have this health problem. Almost 1 in 4 people who are 50 years of age or older have some form of AMD. The number of people with AMD is expected to increase in the future.



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE EYE

Let's take a closer look at the eye to see what happens with macular degeneration. The retina is in the back of the eye. At the center of the retina is a part called the macula.



ANATOMY OF A NORMAL EYE

The macula lets you see things straight ahead of you (this is called central vision) so you can read and see fine detail. Macular degeneration damages the macula, which causes you to lose your sharp, central vision.

There are two forms of macular degeneration. The dry form is more common and initially less serious. It can become more serious, or it can lead to the wet form. The wet form is a more severe type of the disease.

THE DRY FORM CAN LEAD TO THE WET FORM

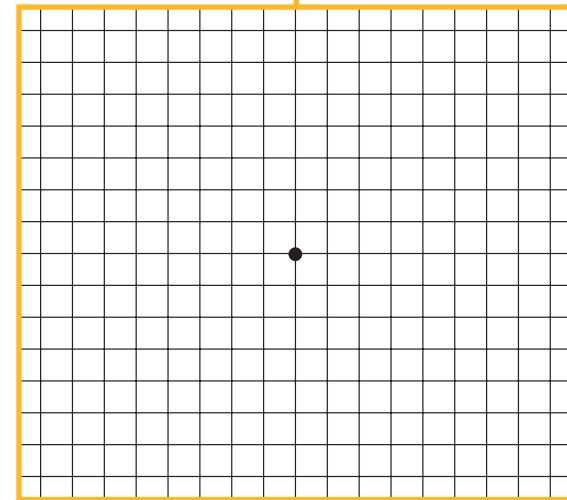
The dry form of macular degeneration is more common. In this form, small yellow deposits called drusen develop under the retina. In some people, parts of the retina begin to waste away, which causes vision loss.

The dry form can often lead to the wet form, which usually is more severe. It's important for your eye doctor to keep track of your disease, so be sure to stay in touch with him or her.

Your doctor may test your sight with an eye chart, a simple tool called the Amsler grid, and tests called fluorescein angiography and optical coherence tomography, which let your doctor view the back of your eye.

TEST YOUR VISION

You can also check yourself daily with the Amsler grid (above right) to notice eye changes early. To use the grid, hold it at a comfortable distance from your eyes or put it on the refrigerator at eye level. Cover one eye and look at the center dot with the uncovered eye. Make sure all the grid lines look



**CHECK YOUR VISION DAILY
WITH THE AMSLER GRID**

straight and crisp. If any areas of the grid seem wavy, blurred, or dark—or if your vision changes in any way—call your eye doctor immediately. You should test both of your eyes.

Almost half of patients with advanced AMD in one eye develop advanced AMD in both eyes within 5 years, so it's important to check both eyes regularly.

You can also take a few minutes to check your vision as you go about your day. Cover one eye at a time and look at what's around you. If you notice that a doorjamb looks crooked or a street sign appears wavy or distorted, call your eye doctor right away. Your healthy eye can make up for vision loss in your other eye, so make sure you cover one eye at a time when checking your vision.

MACULAR DEGENERATION CAN MAKE YOU LOSE YOUR SIGHT

—*Severe vision loss is caused mostly by the wet form of macular degeneration*

In wet macular degeneration, the macula is damaged by growth of abnormal and weak blood vessels. In a healthy eye, normal blood vessels keep the eye in good shape. In wet macular degeneration, abnormal and weak blood vessels start to grow.

These blood vessels leak blood and fluid in the back of the eye, especially the macula (which is why the disease is called wet). This distorts and scars the macula, which harms and may destroy central vision.

You may already have noticed some changes in your vision, such as:

- ▶ Blind spots
- ▶ Wavy or blurred vision
- ▶ Trouble reading signs or books, even right in front of you
- ▶ Darkness in the middle

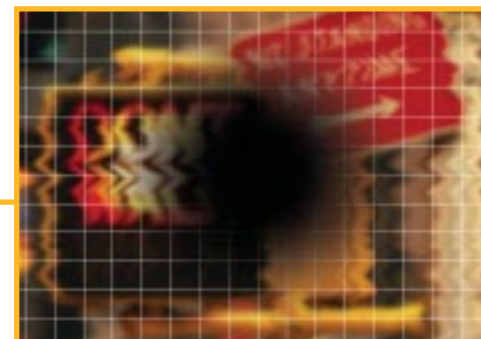
These changes may become worse with time, even with therapy. However, your side, or peripheral, vision usually stays normal, so you can rely on it more to help you see.

In time, though, you may not be able to do things that need good central vision, such as reading, sewing, playing golf, or driving a car.

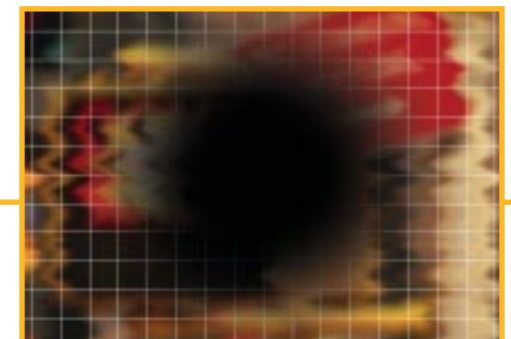
AMD MAY CAUSE VISION TO GET WORSE OVER TIME



BLIND SPOTS MAY APPEAR IN CENTRAL VISION, BUT TRAFFIC SIGNS ARE STILL READABLE



AS TIME GOES ON, BLIND OR DARK SPOTS AND BLURRINESS AND WAVINESS INCREASE



CENTRAL VISION WORSENS UNTIL TRAFFIC SIGNS ARE UNREADABLE

TREATMENTS CAN SLOW WET MACULAR DEGENERATION

You must work with your eye doctor to try to control and slow the disease. He or she can tell you about treatments that can help you halt or slow your vision loss and keep your eyesight.

Your eye doctor will tell you which treatment is best for you, depending on your disease progression and your overall health.

Macular degeneration is a disease that should be treated early with a sense of urgency. It's also a chronic disease, which means it's important to get regular treatment over time. Getting treatment early and keeping up with your regimen is essential to slow or control vision loss.



MAKE A COMMITMENT TO YOUR TREATMENT...



AND A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

The wet form of AMD can cause severe vision loss within months to 2 years. It's important to work closely with your doctor to preserve your sight. Protecting your vision means you'll be able to continue doing things that are important to you, such as reading, driving, cooking, and recognizing the faces of your loved ones. The longer you wait to get treatment, the more vision you could lose.

Commit to following your treatment schedule and working closely with your doctor to preserve your sight. Your vision is worth it!

You can take action to protect your eyesight. Here are some key ways you can stay healthy:

- ▶ **Stop smoking.** Don't be shy about asking your primary care doctor for help
- ▶ **Take supplements** as recommended by your doctor
- ▶ **Control other diseases** that may hurt your eyes, such as high blood pressure or diabetes
- ▶ **Wear sunglasses and a hat** to block out harmful sunlight
- ▶ **Eat foods rich in antioxidants** such as fruits, dark green leafy vegetables, and carrots



SOME HELPFUL TERMS

Age-related macular degeneration (or AMD): An eye disease in which the macula is damaged. This can lead to loss of central vision.

Amsler grid: A tool used to keep track of vision changes, with which you can test yourself daily. It is a grid of black lines with a black dot in the middle.

Antioxidants: Vitamins and nutrients like beta-carotene that may help slow progression of macular degeneration for some patients.

Central vision: Images seen from the center of the eye, coming from light signals received at the macula.

Drusen: Small deposits that form under the retina; associated with macular degeneration.

Dry macular degeneration: A type of macular degeneration in which deposits called drusen form under the retina. This type can lead to wet macular degeneration.

Eye chart: A tool your doctor uses to check your vision. It has letters that are decreasing in size.

Fluorescein angiography: A test in which pictures are taken of your retina, after dye is put into your arm. It allows your doctor to look at the back of your eye and keep track of your disease.

Macula: The small, central part of the retina that gives you sharp, central vision.

Optical coherence tomography (OCT): A test that uses light waves to make a map of the retina and can show damaged areas.

Peripheral vision: Side vision or images seen from the side of the eye.

Retina: The part of your eye that receives light signals and sends them to your brain.

Wet macular degeneration: A type of macular degeneration where new, abnormal, and weak blood vessels form under the macula. The blood vessels break and leak blood and fluid, which leads to central vision loss.



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