

What Is Macular Degeneration?



Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is a condition that damages the macula, the central part of the retina. The macula is responsible for central vision and the ability to see detail.

When the macula is damaged, the eye loses its ability to see detail, such as small print, facial features or small objects. The damaged parts of the macula often cause localized areas of vision loss. When you look at things with the damaged area, objects may seem to fade or disappear. Straight lines or edges may appear wavy.

Symptoms

AMD causes no pain. The most common signs of macular degeneration are:

- ❖ Blurred vision
- ❖ Inability to see details close up, such as faces or words in a book
- Small, but growing, blind spot in the middle of the visual field
- Straight lines appear crooked

Risk Factors You Can Control

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Poor nutrition
- · Unprotected exposure to sunlight
- Excessive sugar and trans fats intake
- Obesity
- Sedentary lifestyle

Risk Factors You Cannot Control

- Age (as you age, the risk increases)
- Race (Caucasians are at greater risk)
- Genetics
- Light eye color

You are never too young to reduce your risk for disease; no matter what your age, you can incorporate the following guidelines into your life.

Regular Screenings

Who?	How often?
People: 40-64	Every 2-4 years
People: 65+	Every 1-2 years
Have a family history	Every 1-2 years
Have diabetes	Every 1-2 years

If you notice changes in vision, visit your eye doctor immediately.

Diagnosis

<u>Regular eye exams</u> are the key to early detection of macular degeneration since symptoms may or may not be present in people who have the disease. A person may have the disease and not even know, so visit your eye care professional regularly.

Eye Exam

During the eye exam, your eye doctor will inquire about any eye problems you may be having as well as your general medical and family history. Several tests are performed to assess your vision combined with examination of the internal structures of the eye after dilation of the pupil.



By following these guidelines, you not only can reduce your risk of developing macular degeneration, but you may also be able to stabilize or slow the effects of vision loss if you have already been diagnosed with the disease.

Once vision is lost due to the growth of abnormal blood vessels, it cannot be restored. Early detection and treatment of AMD can significantly increase the chances of an independent lifestyle.

The **County of Orange Office on Aging** is staffed with certified aging specialists who can give you information on all programs for older adults in Orange County, including meals, transportation, in-home care, health and prescription insurance, caregiver needs, disabled services, legal assistance, adult day care, case management, exercise, social activities and much more!

Information and Assistance for Older Adults: (800) 510-2020 (714) 567-7500