

ELDERCARE PROGRAMME
36th Edition | September 2022

newsletter



AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION

This newsletter is for your general information and is not a substitute for medical advice. You should contact your doctor with any questions about your health, treatment or care.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a common eye condition and a leading cause of vision loss among people aged 60 and older. Evidence shows that the prevalence of AMD is 1% among people in their 60s as opposed to 15% among people in their 90s. AMD is defined as a deterioration or breakdown of the macula, which is part of the retina that allows one to see fine details clearly and perform activities such as reading or driving. In some people, AMD advances slowly and vision loss does not occur for a long time. While in others the condition progresses faster and may lead to a loss of vision in one or both eyes.

Signs and symptoms

AMD usually produces a slow, painless loss of vision. Yet in rare cases loss of vision can be sudden. Early signs of vision loss from AMD include shadowy areas in your central vision or remarkably blurred or distorted vision.

continued overleaf >



What puts you at risk of developing AMD?

Besides macular degeneration being associated with age, evidence strongly suggests that the following are also contributing factors:

Smoking

This is high on the list of risk factors for macular degeneration. Evidence further suggests that living with a smoker doubles the risk of developing AMD.

Race

AMD is more common among people with lighter skin and eye colour than those with darker skin and eye colour.

Hereditary

People with a family history of AMD are at higher risk. Researchers identified nearly 20 genes that can affect the risk of developing AMD.

Drugs side effects

Macular degeneration can be induced from side effects of toxic drugs such as chloroquine, chlorpromazine, thioridazine, fluphenazine, perphenazine etc.

High blood pressure

This may be associated with the development of macular degeneration.

Obesity and inactivity

Evidence shows that overweight people with macular degeneration have more than double the chance of developing advanced forms of macular degeneration than people with normal body weight. People who perform vigorous activities at least three times weekly have less chances of developing advanced AMD, compared to inactive people.

Treatment

There is no absolute cure for AMD. However, some interventions may delay AMD progression or even improve vision. Management for macular degeneration depends on whether the condition is in its early stage (dry form) or more in its advanced stage (wet form) that can lead to serious vision impairment. For early-stage macular degeneration, nutritional intervention such as green leafy vegetables and fish may help prevent progression to the advanced stage. For late macular degeneration, interventions such as laser surgery, photodynamic therapy and vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) are available.

Please consult your ophthalmologist for treatment options.

Macular degeneration may cause significant impairment in one's life if not managed early and properly. If you experience any of the symptoms mentioned in this newsletter do not hesitate to consult your healthcare professional as early intervention can be beneficial.

Sources

All About Vision
NIH National Eye Institute (NEI)

The content of this publication is the intellectual property of Momentum Health Solutions (Pty) Ltd, and any reproduction of this publication is prohibited unless written consent is obtained.