

# Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)



Macular Degeneration

Age related macular degeneration (AMD) is an eye condition which affects the central part of your retina which is called the macula. It causes changes to your central vision which can make some everyday tasks difficult.

Being told you have AMD can be worrying but we hope the information here will offer you some help and support. We've put together a clear guide to the condition, as well as practical and emotional support to help you both understand and live confidently with AMD.

## **Understanding AMD**

AMD causes changes to the macula, which leads to problems with your central vision, it doesn't cause pain, and doesn't lead to a total loss of sight.

AMD affects the vision you use when you're looking directly at something, for example when you're reading, looking at photos or watching television.

## **Staying independent with AMD**

AMD can make some everyday things more difficult. Lighting, magnification aids and eye shields are some of the products that help to maximize vision.

## **Causes of AMD**

The macula contains a few million specialised photoreceptor cells called cone cells.

When someone develops AMD, the cone cells in the macular area become damaged and stop working as well as they should.

## **Symptoms of AMD**

You should have your eyes tested as soon as you can by an optometrist (optician) if you start to experience any of these symptoms:

- You notice any difficulty reading small print even with your reading glasses
- Straight lines start to look wavy or distorted
- Your vision is not as clear as it used to be.

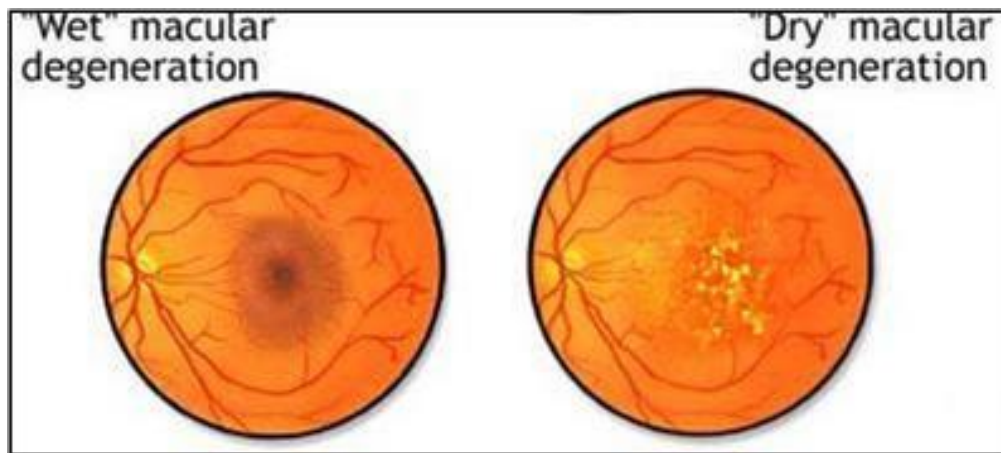
If you notice a sudden change in your vision, you should have your eyes examined by an eye health professional **as soon as you can**.

If your sight changes very quickly then you can attend the **Accident and Emergency** department at your nearest hospital.

If your optometrist thinks you have AMD they will refer you to an ophthalmologist (hospital eye doctor) for further tests and examinations.

### Types of AMD

- Dry AMD
- Wet AMD



### DRY AMD

Dry AMD is the most common type of AMD. It develops very slowly and causes a gradual change in your central vision. At its worst Dry AMD causes a blank patch in the centre of your vision.

### Wet AMD

Wet AMD can develop very quickly, causing serious changes to your central vision in a short period of time, over days or weeks.

You develop wet AMD when the cells of the macula stop working correctly and the body starts growing new blood vessels to fix the problem.

These new blood vessels cause swelling and bleeding underneath the macula which can lead to scarring. The new blood vessels and the scarring damage your central vision and may lead to a blank patch in the centre of your sight.

**Both wet and dry AMD only affect your central vision and will not affect the vision around the edge of your sight (Peripheral vision). So neither type will cause you to lose all of your sight.**

## **Treatments for AMD**

### **Treatment for Dry AMD**

Unfortunately there is currently no way to treat dry AMD. There is some evidence that vitamins can help with the condition. This is covered in more detail in our Understanding AMD download guide.

### **Treatment for Wet AMD**

The treatment available for wet AMD is with a group of medications called anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (anti-VEGF) drugs.

The medicine is injected in to the vitreous, the gel-like substance inside your eye.

Anti VEGF drugs work by stopping new blood vessels from growing, preventing further damage to your sight.