



Live Healthy Georgia— Seniors Taking Charge Vision Awareness Month



February 2011 Newsletter
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February is Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)/Low Vision Awareness month! As we age, it becomes more and more important to get our vision checked regularly. Much of the low vision and blindness caused by age-related eye diseases can be prevented or treated.

What is AMD?

Age-Related Macular Degeneration affects at least 1.75 million Americans aged 40 and above, and it increases in likelihood as we age. It is the leading cause of vision loss in Americans 60 years and older. AMD affects your central vision, which is needed to see objects clearly, such as text and road signs. This disease is not painful and can develop very slowly. There are two forms of AMD: dry and wet. **Dry AMD** occurs more slowly and causes a blurred spot in the center of your vision. This can worsen and cause loss of central vision. Signs of AMD are yellow spots (called drusens and identified by your eye doctor) under a part of your eye called the retina, blurred vision, difficulty recognizing

faces, and/or the need for more light to read. This can affect either both or just one eye. Dry AMD can turn into wet AMD. **Wet AMD** occurs more quickly and is also called advanced AMD. Wet AMD can cause blood and fluid to leak in your eye and damage a part of your eye called the macula. Signs of wet AMD are straight lines looking wavy and/or a small blind spot.

What causes AMD?

Age, being female, smoking, and obesity increase your risk. Also, whites are more likely to lose vision from AMD than African-Americans.

How is AMD detected?

Your eye doctor will put drops in your eyes to help see the back of the eye better. There are different tests than can be done to detect AMD. If you experience any symptoms, be sure to make an appointment!

How is AMD treated?

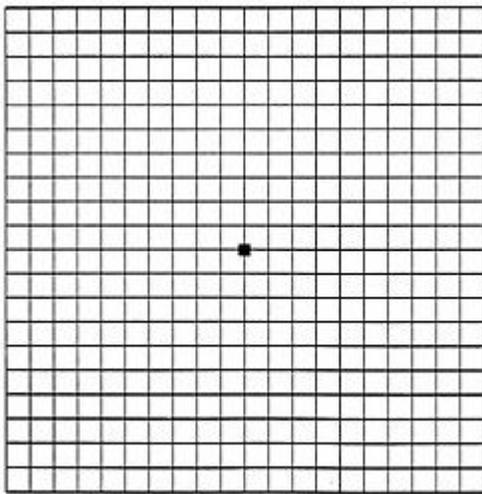
Dry AMD can be treated through a supplement recommended by your doctor. Wet AMD can be treated



through laser surgery, photodynamic therapy (in which you are given an arm injection that lessens your vision loss), and injections into the eye. These treatments are relatively painless.

How do I prevent further vision loss to AMD?

Have an eye exam by your eye doctor at least once a year. Also, use an **Amsler grid** from your doctor.



http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/maculardegen/armd_facts.asp

Use this type of grid every day by covering one eye and looking at the grid; then, switch eyes. If you see changes in the way this grid looks (such as wavy lines) or while reading or watching TV, this could be a sign of wet AMD. You should call your doctor immediately. **There is good news: normal eye use, such as reading and watching TV, cannot worsen your vision.**

What is low vision?

Low vision is partial vision loss that cannot be corrected. A person with

low vision has very reduced visual sharpness or contrast and/or an obstructed field of vision.

What causes low vision? How can I get checked?

Low vision is caused by a variety of conditions and diseases, including AMD, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, eye injuries, stroke, some cataracts, and head injuries. **Getting your eyes checked regularly by an eye doctor can help detect low vision and find the right treatment plan to prevent further vision loss!**

Eye Health Tips

- An eye test for glasses or a driver's license is not enough to detect AMD or low vision. See an optometrist or an ophthalmologist.
- Eat a well-balanced diet filled with fruits and vegetables.
- Manage other diseases that can affect the eyes, such as diabetes.

Other Resources

- http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/maculardegen/armd_facts.asp
- <http://www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision/>
- <http://www.geteyesmart.org/>

References

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- 2) National Eye Institute. NIH. Low vision. Internet: <http://www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision/> (accessed 24 January 2011).
- 3) National Eye Institute. NIH. 2007. Eye health needs of older adults literature review. Internet: http://www.nei.nih.gov/nehep/research/The_Eye_Health_needs_of_Older_Adults_Literature_Review.pdf (accessed 24 January 2011).