



Understanding Macular Degeneration

A patient guide to protecting your central vision

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What is it? Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) affects the **macula** — the small central part of the retina that gives you sharp, straight-ahead vision for reading, driving, and recognizing faces. It is a leading cause of vision loss in adults over 50. The encouraging news: many of the things that influence it are within your control.

The two types

DRY The most common form (about 8 in 10). Tiny yellow deposits called **drusen** build up and the macula slowly thins over time.

WET Less common but faster-moving. Abnormal blood vessels grow and leak fluid beneath the retina, causing sudden changes.

Warning signs to watch for

- Blurry or fuzzy central vision
- Straight lines that look wavy or bent
- A dim, blurry, or empty spot in the center of your view
- Colors that seem less vivid than before

Notice any of these? Call us right away.

Who is at higher risk?

- Being age 50 or older
- Smoking, now or in the past
- A family history of AMD
- High blood pressure, high cholesterol, or heart disease
- Carrying extra weight
- Years of non-mitigated UV light exposure

You can't change your age or family history — but you can still take steps to prevent the onset of macular degeneration.

How to protect your vision

- **Eat for your eyes.** Load up on leafy greens (spinach, kale, collard greens) and have fish twice a week. These build up **lutein** and **zeaxanthin** — protective pigment in the macula.
- **Ask about eye vitamins.** We carry **MacuHealth**, which supplies all three macular pigments (lutein, zeaxanthin & meso-zeaxanthin), and **AREDS2**, the research-backed formula shown to help slow progression in people who already have intermediate AMD.
- **Take a walk through the woods.** Regular exercise improves circulation and is linked to a lower risk of AMD. A walk among the trees adds a bonus: foliage reflects red and near-infrared light, increasing the amount your eyes take in — the same wavelengths thought to support retinal cell health. Walking outdoors is good for your overall health, too.
- **Catch the sunrise and sunset.** Spend time outdoors around sunrise and sunset — there's no need to look directly at the sun. When the sun sits low, its light is richest in red and near-infrared wavelengths. These longer wavelengths are absorbed by the mitochondria in your retinal cells, where they may support cellular energy production and help reduce the cellular stress linked to AMD. This timing also delivers the natural light that helps set your circadian rhythm for better sleep and overall health.
- **Don't smoke.** Quitting is one of the most powerful things you can do for your sight.
- **Shield your eyes from light.** Wear UV-blocking sunglasses and a brimmed hat, especially during peak UV hours (around 10 a.m.–4 p.m.) when UV is most intense — not necessarily at all times.
- **Mind your numbers.** Healthy blood pressure, cholesterol, and weight protect your eyes too.

Don't wait — get checked

- ☐ **Get regular dilated eye exams.** They catch AMD early, often before you notice any change in your vision.
- ☐ **Ask your doctor about Amsler grid usage.** Your doctor can show you how this simple chart helps track changes in your central vision at home.
- ☐ **Act early.** The sooner changes are found, the more we can do to protect your sight.