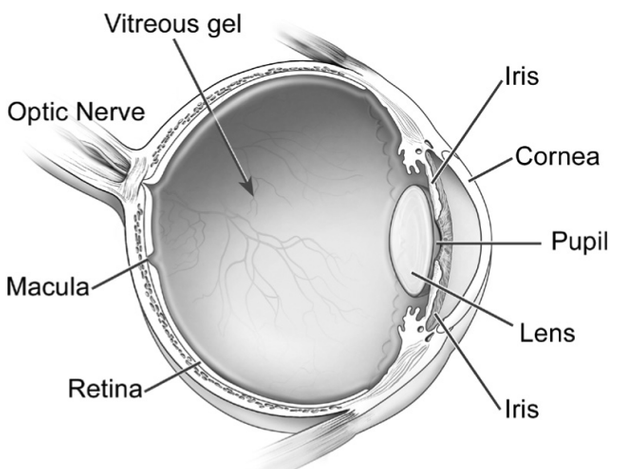
1 What is age-related macular degeneration (AMD)?

AMD is a leading cause of blindness in the United States. The macula, which is in the back of the eye, controls our sharp, central vision. For some people with AMD, the macula gets weak slowly, with gradual vision loss, while for others with AMD, the growth of abnormal blood vessels causing blood and fluid leakage can lead to sudden vision loss in one or both eyes.



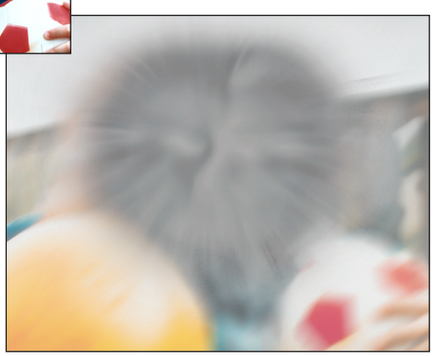
2 Who is most likely to get AMD?

People over the age of 60 have a higher chance of getting AMD. The chances get even higher as you get older. You also have a higher chance if you are White, smoke, are overweight, or have a family history of AMD.

3 What are the symptoms of AMD?

People with early AMD may not notice much change in their vision, especially if the disease only affects one eye. There may be some blurriness that might improve with brighter light. As AMD gets worse, people may find it harder to see faces or words in a book. People with late AMD may notice that straight lines appear crooked and more of their central vision is lost.

Normal vision.



A scene as it might be viewed by a person with age-related macular degeneration.

4 How do you know if you have AMD?

An eye care professional can tell if you have AMD by giving you a comprehensive dilated eye exam. During the exam, drops are placed in your eyes to widen, or dilate, the pupils. Then a special lens is used to look at the retina for damage. The retina is the layer of tissue in the back of the eye that is sensitive to light. After the exam, your vision may be blurry for a period of hours. The doctor may also give you an Amsler grid to look at every day. On the Amsler grid, people with normal vision will see straight black lines with a dot in the center. But those with later stages of AMD will see wavy or blurry lines and some dark spots in the middle. If any of these tests show problems in a person's central vision, the doctor may order a test that can show if there are leaking blood vessels around the macula.

5 How is AMD treated?

AMD cannot be cured, but it can be treated to keep it from getting worse. In some cases, people's vision can get better. Catching AMD early is important to protect your eyesight. In the early stage of AMD, treatments can include eating better and take more vitamins. Talk to your eye care professional about the best vitamins for you. If abnormal blood vessels develop, you may require drugs in the eye or laser surgery to help stop the growth of abnormal blood vessels in the retina.

6 What can you do to protect your vision?

The risk of losing vision from AMD can be lowered by doing the following:

- Have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year if you are age 60 or older.
- Exercise regularly and control your weight.
- Quit smoking.
- Eat more leafy green vegetables and fish.
- Keep your blood pressure normal.
- Keep your cholesterol levels low.

For more information, contact—

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National Eye Health Education Program NEHEP

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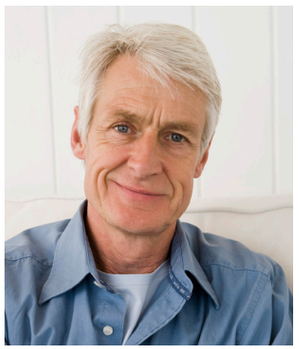
Don't lose sight of

Age-Related Macular Degeneration



Information for people at risk