

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD)

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD or AMD) is damage or breakdown of the macula.

The back of the eye contains a layer of light-sensitive tissue called the retina. The macula is the center part of the retina. The macula area is visually responsible for what is straight in front of you, for seeing colors and for fine detail vision, such as for reading and writing.

ARMD affects distance and close vision. It is the leading cause of vision loss in seniors.

With ARMD, the macula is damaged and central vision is lost, but not peripheral (side) vision. Although ARMD is not total blindness, those with ARMD still find many everyday tasks, such as reading or driving, difficult or impossible to perform.

There are two types of ARMD - dry and wet. Dry ARMD is the more common. Ninety percent of ARMD patients have this type. It occurs when the macular tissues of the eye thin and slowly lose function. Approximately 14% to 20% of people with dry ARMD develop wet ARMD, which is caused by leaking blood vessels behind the macula, leading to formation of scar tissue on the retina. Wet ARMD is less common, but usually is more serious. If it is not treated, it may get worse rapidly.

Symptoms

One or more of these symptoms could mean you have ARMD, but these vision problems can also be caused by other conditions...

- Objects cannot be seen clearly
- Straight lines may appear to be wavy
- Distorted vision
- Lack of clear and correct color vision
- Print looks washed out while reading
- Darkness in the center of your vision
- Gray or white spot in the center of your vision

If you have any of these symptoms, please call us immediately to schedule a comprehensive eye exam.

Causes

Research has not found the exact cause for ARMD, but it is most often found in people over the age of 60 and is more common in those who have a history of family members who have ARMD. The risk factors associated with ARMD include smoking, obesity, heart disease and hypertension. ARMD is also more common in those with light complexions.

Treatment

At this time, there is no cure for dry or wet ARMD. However, there are treatments that can slow or prevent further vision loss, so you should be under the care of an eye doctor, who will check your vision regularly and monitor the progression of your condition.

Dependent upon the severity of dry macula degeneration, certain types of antioxidant vitamins, minerals and other nutrients can decrease its progression and potential involvement to the uninvolved eye.

Recent studies have demonstrated that certain medications (e.g. Lucentis, Avastin, Macugen) given into the eye (intravitreal injections) can potentially stabilize or even improve the vision in wet form of macula degeneration.

Because recent research has increased the treatment options in macula degeneration, it is imperative that patients with symptoms undergo early evaluations.

Fluorescein angiography and Ocular Coherent Tomography (OCT) testing are essential for early diagnosis and are available at Eye Surgical-Medical Associates.