

Patient information

Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)

St Pauls Eye Department - Royal Liverpool Hospital

This leaflet sets out to answer some of the most common questions asked by patients. We hope you find it helpful.

What is Macular Degeneration?

Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is a disease of the macula, which is the central part of the light sensitive tissue at the back of the eye called the retina. It can lead to loss of central vision. When the macula is affected, blurring and distortion of the central vision occurs interfering with reading, watching TV and other general daily activities.

AMD occurs in two forms:

- Dry AMD occurs when the light sensitive tissue of the macula slowly deteriorates, gradually affecting vision over time.
- Wet AMD occurs when abnormal blood vessels grow in the macula. They can bleed, fluid can build-up, causing damage to your vision.

Occasionally Macular Degeneration (MD) occurs due to other conditions of the eye such as high myopia or different types of inflammation.

What is the Macula?

The macula is the central part of the retina, which receives central vision. The retina lines the inside of the back of the eye. Its light-sensitive cells, respond to the images seen by the eye.

These responses are then transmitted through electrical impulses to the brain where they are perceived as sight.

Signs and Symptoms?

AMD is painless but you may have some discomfort due to sensitivity to light. The main signs and symptoms are below.

- Loss of central vision (blind spot obscuring vision), this may happen gradually with Dry AMD and more rapid with Wet AMD, your peripheral vision may still be fine.
- Difficulty reading text or watching TV, due to blurriness.
- Straight lines such as a doorframe or wall tiles become wavy.

Dry AMD can progress to Wet AMD and it is important to look out for the early signs of this change. One of the early Wet AMD signs is for straight lines to appear distorted and wavy.

Can this condition be cured?

Although the condition may not be curable, treatment can be given to slow down or halt its progression.

Treatments available now, include intraocular drug therapies, laser and photodynamic therapy, and, all of proven benefit. Other treatments are under development including radiotherapy, surgery and other drugs.

For people whose central vision has been affected there are many useful aids to vision that can help to make the most of the limited remaining vision.

What if my eyesight suddenly deteriorates?

Because sight deteriorates rapidly in neovascular macular degeneration you need to be seen within a couple of working days if treatment is to be effective.

Therefore if you have been diagnosed as having macular degeneration and your sight becomes distorted or blurred, and remains affected for one or two days, you should immediately come to hospital for examination.

It is possible that you will need to have your eyes checked using fluorescein angiography, which is a technique that allows photographs of the vessels at the back of the eye to be taken. After this test, your ophthalmologist will discuss the results and any possible treatment.

Are there any risks involved?

As with any procedure there may be risks involved. You will be given information and be able to discuss these fully with your consultant before your investigation.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

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