

## Patient information

# **Nutritional Supplements for Age-related Macular Degeneration**

St Paul's Eye Department - Royal Liverpool Hospital

### **Who should read this leaflet?**

You should read this leaflet if you have a diagnosis of age-related (AMD) which your eye doctor will have advised you about.

### **How do nutritional supplements work?**

AMD is a form of wear and tear of the retina, the tissue which is sensitive to light at the back of your eye. These degenerative changes accumulate during your lifetime.

It is thought this can be slowed by “antioxidants” which mop up the damaging chemicals in the blood. The damaging chemicals are increased by smoking and are also influenced by inherited genetic factors.

### **Can a healthy diet help?**

Results from large studies show that people who have diets rich in antioxidants have a lower risk of AMD progressing to an advanced form which can damage central vision. Lutein and zeaxanthin are eye pigments that are also powerful antioxidants and have been found to reduce the risk of advanced AMD.

These nutrients are particularly high in dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach and kale.

Research also suggests that having a diet rich in omega-3 and eating at least one 4oz portion of grilled or baked fish per week reduces the risk of ‘advanced AMD’.

Oily fish is the best source omega-3. However, taking supplements containing Omega-3 has not been shown to make any difference to the progression of AMD.

### **What else can I do to help my eyes?**

- **Stop smoking:** People who smoke are at a much higher risk of both developing and worsening of AMD. Evidence shows that smokers may be five to seven times more likely to develop AMD compared to non-smokers.
- **Lose weight:** People with AMD who have a high body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more are approximately twice as likely to experience a worsening of their condition compared to people with a normal or low BMI of less than 25.

### **Can nutritional supplements help?**

Although it is thought that a good balanced diet should be adequate, many people do not get enough vitamins and minerals from their diet alone. The Age-Related Eye Diseases Study (AREDS) was carried out in 2001.

The results from this large clinical trial showed that in people with moderate AMD a particular combination of high levels of antioxidants (vitamins A, C and E copper and Zinc) can reduce the risk of developing advanced AMD from 28% to 21% over five years (a reduction of about 25%). This means that if 100 suitable people take the AREDS supplement, seven will benefit by not developing advanced AMD.

In 2006 the same research group began a second study, AREDS 2, of more than 4000 participants in which they tested adding lutein, zeaxanthin and omega-3 fatty acids to the original AREDS formulation. They also removed beta-carotene, which increases risk of lung cancer in smokers, and reduced the dose of zinc.

The results published in May 2013 showed no change in effectiveness of the new preparation. This means that smokers (or recent ex-smokers) can take an equally effective supplement.

## **Who should take supplements?**

Eye supplements matching the AREDS formulation may be beneficial in people with moderate AMD (before the advanced stage is developed) in both eyes or with advanced AMD in one eye.

The reduction in risk of taking supplements is modest, but worthwhile if you would like to do anything possible to reduce the risk of AMD progressing. If you have advanced AMD in both eyes it is unlikely to make any difference.

Your eye specialist can advise you further on whether these supplements would be helpful for you.

These supplements are generally not available on prescription and have to be purchased over the counter or internet.

There is currently not enough evidence to show that these supplements make any difference to people with early AMD or a family history of AMD.

## **Who should not take supplements?**

Studies have shown that high doses of beta-carotene (a pro-vitamin of vitamin A) increase the risk of lung cancer in people who smoke.

**Current or recent ex-smokers should avoid taking any supplements based on the original AREDS formula or those containing beta-carotene. They can take AREDS2 formulation.**

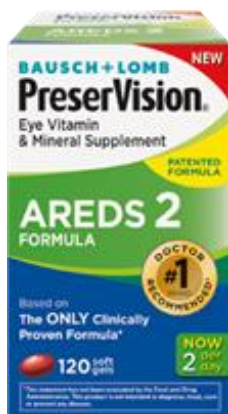
## **Will it make my vision better?**

These supplements will not improve your vision. However approximately one in every thirteen people taking supplements benefit from a delay in worsening of their eyesight.

## **What nutritional supplements are available?**

There are large numbers of eye health supplements available in health food stores, grocery stores, pharmacies and through the internet. However, most of these do not have the same formula as that used in AREDS.

We recommend the following supplements that most closely match the formulation used in AREDS 2 and are currently available in the UK:



### **PreserVision AREDS 2 formula (Soft gels)**

**Dose: One twice a day with meals**



### **Viteyes AREDS 2**

**Dose: One twice a day with meals**

Other supplements such as ICaps, Visionace and Vitalux **do not** match the AREDS 2 formula and are not recommended.

## **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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