

Dry Macular Degeneration

This material will help you understand dry macular degeneration and how it is treated.

What is dry macular degeneration?

Dry macular degeneration is a disease that damages the macula of the eye. The macula is the central part of the retina. The retina is the film in the back of the eye that captures the image that we see. The macula allows us to see fine details clearly. A damaged macula will make it difficult to thread a needle, read a book, or even drive. A damaged macula can cause blurry vision.

What causes dry macular degeneration?

Dry macular degeneration is caused when the retina can no longer process the eye's "garbage" well. These deposits of garbage, called drusen, build up underneath the retina in the macula. The drusen cause the macula to be bumpy instead of smooth, which distorts the image it captures. In the same way, an image taken by a camera with film that was not smooth and clean would not produce a clear photograph. Smoking cigarettes increases the risk for macular degeneration. Not eating enough fruits and vegetables and having macular degeneration in your family also increase your risk.

How is dry macular degeneration treated?

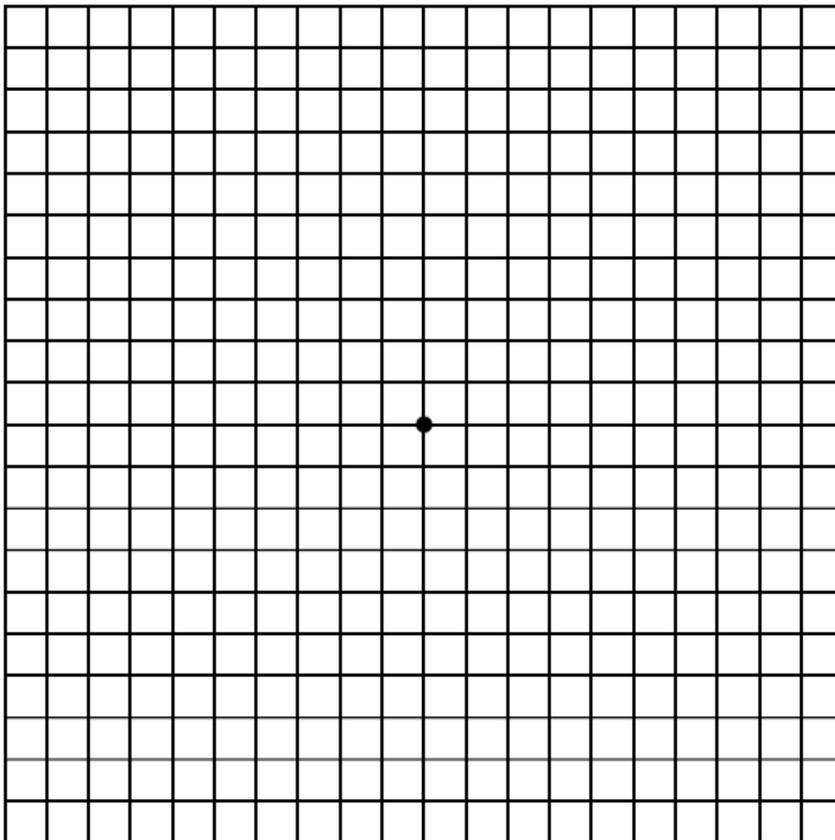
Special eye vitamins, called AREDS vitamins, have been proven to reduce the chances of having dry macular degeneration turn into the worse form of macular degeneration, called wet macular degeneration. The brands of AREDS vitamins we recommend are called Preservision or OcuVite and you can buy them over-the-counter. If you are a smoker, you will need to use a different kind of AREDS vitamins (see last paragraph).

How can I prevent dry macular degeneration from getting worse?

Wet macular degeneration occurs when too many little drusen have accumulated underneath the retina. The retina becomes almost cracked like an old sidewalk. Then, just like weeds can grow through sidewalk cracks, blood vessels can grow up through the macula and leak and bleed in the center of your vision.

That is why it is important to monitor your vision daily with your Amsler grid (see below). If your eyes are getting worse, you will instantly see that the central part of your vision in one eye has become dark or the lines on the Amsler grid have become wavy. This happens if your dry macular degeneration turns into wet macular degeneration. This is a very obvious change.

Keep your Amsler grid where it is easy to make it part of your daily routine, like on the refrigerator. When you go to open the refrigerator to make your breakfast in the morning, check the grid. If you wear glasses, wear your glasses when checking the grid. Cover up one eye and stare at the black dot in the center of the grid. Make sure the central area of the grid does not look like the lines are wavy or blacked out. Do the same with the other eye. As long as the little boxes look like a normal grid with both eyes, you are doing well and you have not developed wet macular degeneration.



If you *do* notice a change on your Amsler grid, call your eye doctor's office right away. We have new medications for wet macular

degeneration that can heal vision loss. These medications work best if started as soon as a change is noticed. The reason we want you to check your Amsler at home is so you can detect any change quickly. If you were to wait to come in for your next eye exam to find out if your macular degeneration has gotten worse, that might be too late.

Another way you can help to prevent macular degeneration from worsening is quitting smoking. If you smoke, it is a good time to cut down or quit. You can help prevent vision loss from macular degeneration by quitting smoking. If you have smoked in the last 10 years or are currently smoking, there are special AREDS vitamins for smokers. Make sure you buy the smoker formulation of the AREDS vitamins. The regular kind was not meant for people who smoke. It has been found that some of the vitamins in the regular kind could cause harm in smokers.

For more information, scan this code with your smartphone or visit the website listed.



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/amd.cfm>

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Author: Shayla Wilson, MPH candidate
Reviewers: Gale Oren, MILS and Paula Anne Newman-Casey, MD, MS

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