

Myopic Degeneration

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

What is myopic degeneration?

Myopic degeneration is a severe form of nearsightedness that causes damage to the retina. The retina is the layer of nerve tissue in the back of the eye that acts like the “film” of the eye. It captures images and then sends them to the brain. Myopic degeneration is a common cause of legal blindness. It is also called degenerative myopia and pathological myopia.

What causes myopic degeneration?

Myopic degeneration is related to myopia or nearsightedness. People who are nearsighted can see close objects clearly, but distant objects seem blurry. This is because a myopic eye is longer than normal. In myopic degeneration, nearsightedness is very severe. Over time, the length of your eye causes the sclera (the white part of the eye) to stretch. This leads to thinning of your sclera and retina. People with a family history are most at risk for developing this condition.

How is myopic degeneration diagnosed?

Myopic degeneration can be diagnosed during a regular eye exam. During the exam, your eye doctor checks your vision. Severe nearsightedness is one sign the doctor looks for. People with myopic degeneration also have retinal abnormalities that your doctor can see during the exam. To see the retinas in

the back of your eyes, your doctor dilates (widens) your pupils (the black areas in the center of your eyes).

Myopic degeneration is often diagnosed during childhood before the teenage years. The condition may become worse in adulthood.

How is myopic degeneration treated?

Glasses and contact lenses help treat vision loss from myopic degeneration. They work by refocusing light onto your retina and help you see more clearly. Many people with myopic degeneration prefer contact lenses over glasses. The lenses of glasses tend to be thick and heavy when nearsightedness is severe. If you would like glasses, choosing certain types of frames and lenses can help. Unlike other forms of myopia, treatment with LASIK (laser refractive surgery) has not been shown to improve eyesight in people with myopic degeneration.

What are complications of myopic degeneration?

In addition to vision loss, myopic degeneration can cause serious complications. Possible complications include:

- retinal tears
- retinal detachment
- myopic macular degeneration
- macular stretching or splitting
- glaucoma
- cataract
- growth and leaking of blood vessels under the retina

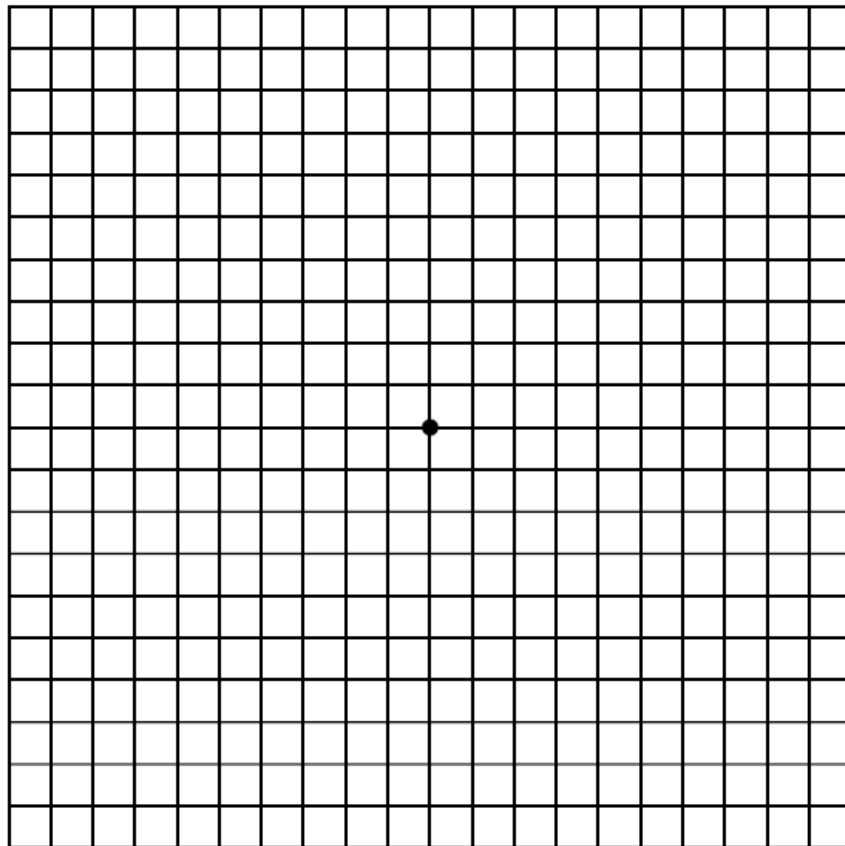
How can I avoid complications?

If you have any complications, getting treatment right away is very important. Having your eyes checked regularly by your eye doctor can help detect any

early signs of these conditions. Talk to your doctor about how often you should have eye exams.

Wearing appropriate eye protection during certain activities is important for patients with myopic degeneration. Contact sports and sports played with a ball are especially dangerous. Because myopic degeneration causes your retinas to thin, they are more prone to damage. Talk to your doctor about which activities you should avoid.

Your doctor may recommend using an Amsler grid (like the image below) to monitor your eyes at home. To use the grid, cover up one eye and stare at the black dot in the center. Do the same with the other eye. If you wear glasses, wear them when checking the grid. If the lines look wavy, call your eye doctor's office right away. This may be an early sign of a complication.



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



<http://eyewiki.aao.org/Myopia>

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