

Wet Macular Degeneration

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

What is wet macular degeneration?

Wet 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.

Wet macular degeneration is the least common form of macular degeneration. It usually causes more damage than the dry form, but there are new treatments for it that can stop this vision loss.

What causes wet macular degeneration?

Macular degeneration occurs when the retina can no longer process the eye's "garbage" well. These deposits, called drusen, accumulate 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 would not produce a clear photograph.

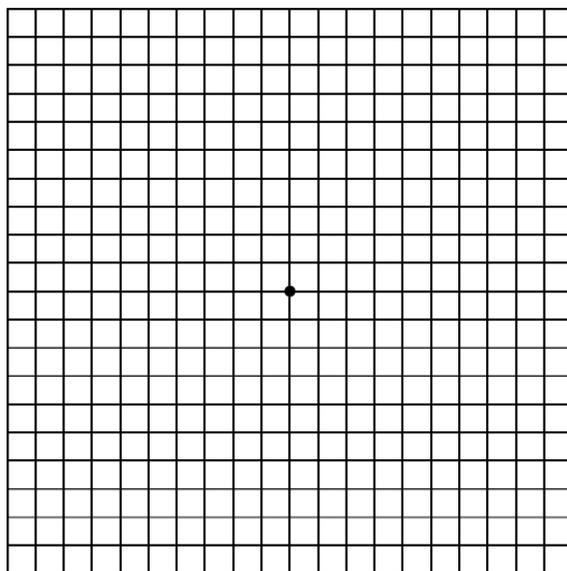
Wet macular degeneration occurs when too many little drusen have accumulated underneath the retina. The retina becomes cracked almost like an old sidewalk. Then, just like weeds can grow through sidewalk cracks, blood vessels grow up through the macula and leak and bleed in the center of your vision.

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 wet macular degeneration treated?

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 darker or the lines on the Amsler grid have become wavier. This is a sign that your macular degeneration has bled. 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 grid looks the same as it did in the doctor's office and there are no new changes, your wet macular degeneration is stable.



If you *do* notice a change on your Amsler grid, call your eye doctor's office right away. Our new medications for wet macular degeneration can heal vision loss. They work best if you come in to the doctor to get them right away. 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, it might be too late.

The common medications used to treat wet macular degeneration are called anti-VEGF (anti-vascular endothelial growth factor) medications. These medications cause the blood vessels that are leaking and bleeding to stop growing. These medications are given as injections in the eye doctor's office. These injections are usually needed every month or so to keep those blood vessels away. It is important to come back for your check-ups and your injections. If you go too long without the medication, the damage from the macular degeneration can become permanent as the retina begins to form a scar.

Sometimes, laser treatments may be used as well to treat wet macular degeneration.

For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.



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



[http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/macular.degeneration.ht
ml](http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/macular.degeneration.html)

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

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