



## What you should know

# What is age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and who's at risk?

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a chronic, progressive and painless illness that causes the cells in the macula to break down. The macula is the part of the eye that helps you see light and color. This breakdown leads to loss of central vision. Your central vision allows you to see fine details such as faces, the television, computers and books.

### **Quick fact:**

AMD cannot be prevented. You can lessen the effects by finding it early and starting treatment.

### **There's more than one kind**

There are two types of AMD: dry AMD and wet AMD. Dry AMD occurs when dry yellowish deposits build up under the macula. It accounts for 90% of AMD cases. Dry AMD usually does not cause a total loss of vision, but it must be closely monitored. Dry AMD can lead to wet AMD. Wet AMD accounts for 10% of the cases. It occurs when tiny abnormal blood vessels grow behind the retina and leak blood and fluids that damage the macula. A person's quality of vision decreases as the macula breaks down.

In the early stages of AMD, there may not be any symptoms. In the later stages, a person may notice the following symptoms:

- > Objects, print and faces may become blurry, hazy or distorted
- > You may notice a blind spot in the center of your vision
- > You may need more light to read
- > While reading, some of the letters or words may be missing
- > Colors may not seem as vivid
- > Straight lines may appear wavy

**During your annual eye exam, your eye doctor can also detect signs of more than 23 other diseases.**

**Make sure you are making eye care part of your overall wellness care.**

## Exams are your best defense

Regular eye exams are the only way to find and monitor macular degeneration. Watching for changes in your eyes over time is essential. During the exam, your eye doctor will check how well your eyes can see detail and shape your vision. Your eye doctor also use a special magnifying lens to look through the pupil of your eye to directly look at your retina. The eye doctor will look for signs of AMD and other diseases.

Early diagnosis can avoid further vision loss. Treatment is most effective if it is started early. If your eye doctor thinks there may be a problem, more testing will be needed. Photographs of the inside of the eye and scanning computerized diagnostic tests and fluorescein may be needed to determine the extent of AMD.

Age is the main risk factor for AMD. Others are diet, exposure to ultraviolet light of the sun (UV light), smoking, genetic factors, gender, race, high blood pressure, and diabetes. The American Optometric Association and Prevent Blindness America recommend the following to reduce your risk of developing AMD:

- > Protect your eyes from the sun by wearing sunglasses that block out 100% of UV light
- > Stop smoking — AMD is twice as common in people who smoke
- > Eat foods or take supplements that contain antioxidants
- > Avoid trans fats
- > Control your blood pressure and cholesterol
- > Stay active and exercise
- > Visit your eye doctor for comprehensive eye exams
- > If you are over the age of 50, have a comprehensive eye exam



Source: [www.AMDawareness.org](http://www.AMDawareness.org)

Spectera vision coverage provided by or through UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company, located in Hartford, Connecticut, UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company of New York, located in Islandia, New York, or their affiliates. Administrative services provided by Spectera, Inc., United HealthCare Services, Inc. or their affiliates. Plans sold in Texas use policy form number VPOL.06.TX or VPOL.13.TX and associated COC form number VCOC.INT.06.TX or VCOC.CER.13.TX. Plans sold in Virginia use policy form number VPOL.06.VA or VPOL.13.VA and associated COC form number VCOC.INT.06.VA or VCOC.CER.13.VA.