

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) fact sheet



Statistics

AMD is the most common macular disease in Australia:



It is the leading cause of blindness and severe vision loss, accounting for 50% of blindness in Australia.^{1,2}



AMD is a major **chronic disease** with a prevalence 50 times that of multiple sclerosis and 4 times that of dementia.¹

50+

It primarily affects those **over the age of 50** and the incidence increases with age.



1 in 7 (1.4 million) Australians over the age of 50 years have some evidence of AMD.¹

This is estimated to increase to **1.7 million by 2030**, in the absence of adequate treatment and prevention measures.

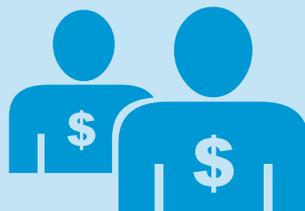


Impact

The impact of AMD on quality of life is equivalent to cancer or coronary heart disease.³

Vision loss from AMD:

In 2010, the total cost of vision loss associated with AMD was estimated at \$5.15 billion, of which the direct cost was \$748.4 million (\$6,982 per person).¹



The socio-economic impacts of AMD include³:

- Lower employment rates
- Higher use of services
- Social isolation
- Emotional distress
- An earlier need for nursing home care



Risk Factors and Prevention

AMD is caused by genetic and environmental factors.

Risk factors include:

Age: risk increases dramatically with age.¹

Family History: 50% risk if there is an affected first degree family member.⁴ It is estimated that genetic factors play a role in up to 70% of cases.¹

Smoking: smokers are at 3 to 4 times higher risk of AMD than non-smokers and the onset of disease occurs 5 to 10 years earlier.^{1,5,6} Smoking also increases the risk of disease progression.⁷ The risk reduces with smoking cessation.

Sunlight Exposure: exposure during working life may influence disease development.⁸



Preventative measures include:

Having regular eye tests including a check of the macula

Not smoking¹

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, controlling weight and participating in regular exercise

Eating a healthy, well-balanced diet¹:

Eating fish two to three times a week, dark green leafy vegetables and fresh fruit daily, and a handful of nuts a week.

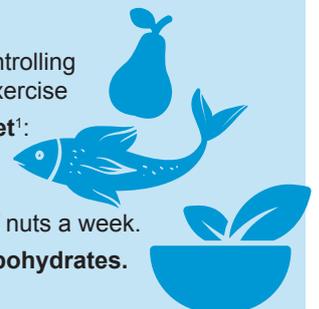
Choosing low glycemic index carbohydrates.

Limiting the intake of fats.

Consideration can be given to an appropriate supplement in some people, in consultation with an eye care professional

Providing adequate protection for the eyes from sunlight exposure, including when young⁸

Monitoring vision with an Amsler grid



IMPORTANT

It is recommended that changes in diet or lifestyle are undertaken in consultation with a medical practitioner.

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Types of AMD and treatment

AMD is a painless and progressive disease of the macula, the part of the retina responsible for detailed central vision. There is currently no 'cure' for AMD. Treatment options are dependent on the stage and type of the disease and aim to stabilise and maintain best vision for as long as possible.

EARLY AND INTERMEDIATE AMD⁹

DESCRIPTION:

Caused by the progressive build-up of waste material (drusen) under the retina. May progress to late AMD.

TREATMENT:

Currently there is no treatment available for early/intermediate AMD. Research is being conducted to develop treatments. Diet & lifestyle are important for maintaining healthy eyes. Depending on the stage of AMD, large well-conducted clinical studies have demonstrated that select combinations of vitamins and minerals may reduce the risk of progression in some individuals. Advice from an eye care professional should be sought.



IMPORTANT

Have an eye test as soon as possible if there are any sudden changes in vision.

LATE AMD - may be the neovascular ("wet") or atrophic ("dry") form⁹

Neovascular (wet) AMD

DESCRIPTION:

Caused by the formation of fragile blood vessels which leak fluid and blood within and under the retina. Often leads to a rapid loss of central vision. Loss of vision in one eye may go unnoticed if vision in the fellow eye is good. Regular vision testing of each eye in turn is recommended.

TREATMENT:

Highly effective treatment (anti-VEGF injections) is now available. Early treatment produces the best outcomes. Treatment is undertaken on an ongoing basis. Research is ongoing to develop other forms of treatments, including gene and stem cell therapies.

Atrophic (dry) AMD

DESCRIPTION:

Caused by the gradual atrophy (loss) of retinal cells. It may lead to gradual loss of central vision.

TREATMENT:

Currently there is no treatment available for dry AMD. Research is being conducted to develop treatments.



IMPORTANT

Early detection and prompt intervention are vital to saving sight.

References

- 1 'Eyes on the future - A clear outlook on age-related macular degeneration'. Report by Deloitte Access Economics & Macular Degeneration Foundation, 2011. (2021 prevalence estimates are derived from a straight line extrapolation between 2020 and 2025 estimates in this report.)
- 2 Taylor H et al. *Vision Loss in Australia*. MJA 2005;182:565-568.
- 3 *The Global Economic Cost of Visual Impairment* Access Economics & AMD Alliance International 2010.
- 4 Klaver C et al. *Genetic risk of age-related maculopathy. Population-based familial aggregation study*. Arch Ophthalmol 1998;116:1646-1651.
- 5 Mitchell P et al. *Five-year incidence of age-related maculopathy lesions: the Blue Mountains Eye Study*. Ophthalmology 2001;109:1092-1097.
- 6 Tan J et al. *Smoking and the long-term incidence of age-related macular degeneration: the Blue Mountains Eye Study*. Arch Ophthalmol 2007;125:1089-1095.
- 7 Myers CE et al. *Cigarette Smoking and the Natural History of Age-related Macular Degeneration: the Beaver Dam Eye Study*. Ophthalmology 2014;121(10):1949-1955
- 8 Schick T et al. *History of Sunlight Exposure is a Risk Factor for Age-Related Macular Degeneration*. Retina 2016;36(4):787-90.
- 9 Ferris FL 3rd et al. *Clinical Classification of Age-related Macular Degeneration*. Ophthalmology 2013;120:844-51.

Contact MDFA for free information and support:

Free National Helpline: 1800 111 709
Email: info@mdfoundation.com.au
Website: www.mdfoundation.com.au

Check your risk of macular disease. Do the MDFA's online quiz. It's 60 seconds that could save your sight.
www.CheckMyMacula.com.au

