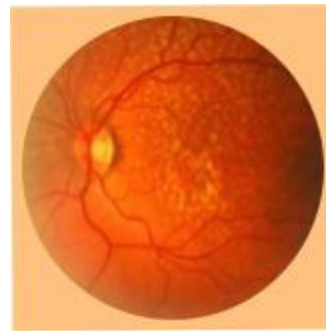


Macular Degeneration

Age-related macular degeneration (ARMD) is an ageing process in the eye. The macula is a part of the retina (a layer of tissue on the back of the eye) which is responsible for central vision. Layers of the retina can thicken or thin and waste material (which is usually removed) can form deposits, which distort the retina. This distortion can then cause damage to the other layers of the retina. In some cases new blood vessels can grow into the macula from beneath. These newly formed vessels are fragile, and often leak blood into the retina, where it causes scar tissue to form or haemorrhages. This scarring blocks out central vision and can cause blindness.



Healthy Macula



Damaged Macula

Patients with ARMD may notice that their vision has deteriorated, fine details of objects become hard to see, straight lines may be wavy or distorted. Many patients do not realise that they have a problem until their vision becomes affected.

During your visit to your eye specialist you may have your pupils dilated so that the internal structures of the eye can be inspected and observed for early signs of ARMD. Patients can also monitor their own vision changes with an Amsler Grid. This is a regular grid like graph paper. Patients with changes in their vision due to ARMD may report that sections or lines of the grid are distorted.

There are two different types of macular degeneration. The dry version of macular degeneration develops first. In some cases the condition progresses to become wet macular degeneration. In the absence of treatment, wet macular degeneration can result in severe central vision loss, which will affect everyday things such as driving, shopping, managing money, preparing

meals, housework, using the phone and reading. Both near-vision and distance-vision activities can be affected.

Modern treatments for wet macular degeneration can prevent vision from deteriorating further and in some cases will even improve it. Wet macular degeneration can have other effects on people too. Up to 30% of people with age-related macular degeneration suffer from clinical depression. Common worries include concerns about the future and how they will cope if their eyesight gets worse. Early detection and treatment are therefore vitally important.



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