

Macular Degeneration

WHAT IS AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION?

The macula is the central part of the retina, the light sensitive tissue that lines the back of the eye.

The retina processes all visual images. It is responsible for your ability to read, recognise faces, drive, and see colours clearly.



Normal Vision



Macular Degeneration

You are reading this brochure using your macula. Macular degeneration causes progressive macular damage resulting in loss of central vision while leaving the peripheral vision intact.

HOW COMMON IS AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION?

Age-Related Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and vision loss in Australia. **One in seven** Australians over the age of 50 years (1.19 million people) has some evidence of the disease and the incidence increases with age.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF MACULAR DEGENERATION?

Age-Related Macular Degeneration is specified as 'age-related' as there are other conditions that can cause the macular to degenerate.

There are two forms of Age-Related Macular Degeneration and they are known as the 'dry' (non-exudative) and the 'wet' (exudative) forms.

The dry form results in a gradual scarring and loss of central vision.

The wet form causes sudden loss of central vision due to abnormal blood vessel growth under the retina. Immediate medical treatment is essential for the wet form.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

- Aging.
- Family history.
- Smoking.
- Prolonged UV light exposure.
- Caucasian race.
- High blood pressure.
- Female gender.
- Cardiovascular disease.
- Diet low in omega-3.
- Diet high in fat & low in antioxidants.
- Lack of exercise.



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KEY SYMPTOMS MAY INCLUDE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Difficulty with reading or other fine detailed work.
- Distortion, where straight lines appear wavy or bent.
- Difficulty distinguishing faces.
- Dark patches or empty spaces in central vision.
- The need for better lighting, increased sensitivity to glare, poor night vision or poor colour detection.

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR MACULAR DEGENERATION?

Treatment options depend on the stage of the disease.

Lowering your risk factors and maintaining regular eye examinations with your Optometrist will minimise your risk of vision loss.

For the dry form, specially formulated nutritional supplements such as Macutec Tablets aim to lower the risk of progressing to the wet form.

Wet Macular Degeneration, if detected early, can be treated with regular Anti-VEGF injections into the eye. Although this sounds scary, it is quick and painless and is the best option currently for maintaining sight.

People with varying degrees of vision loss continue to lead independent lives with the support of low vision services and visual aids. Technology is rapidly improving to benefit people with low vision.