



EYECARE & LASER CENTERS

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4 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT MACULAR DEGENERATION

The leading cause of vision loss among Americans 60 years of age and older is macular degeneration. It affects 11 million people in the United States, and that number is expected to double by 2050.

The disease affects the small central portion of your retina, known as the macula. This portion of your eye is responsible for our sharp, central vision. It helps us read, recognize faces, drive, and more. In macular degeneration, this spot deteriorates and leads to irreversible destruction that could dramatically change your life as you age.

1 THERE ARE TWO FORMS: DRY & WET

Dr. Carmelina Gordon, of TLC Eyecare & Laser Centers, says the dry form of macular degeneration is the more stable form of the disease while the wet form is the more aggressive one. There is a 10% chance of converting to the wet form from the dry stage. Ninety percent of legal blindness from macular degeneration is due to the wet form.

The dry form is characterized by the presence of yellow deposits in the macula, while the wet form is characterized by leaking abnormal blood vessels growing underneath the macula.

2 RISKS INCLUDE AGE AND FAMILY HISTORY

While age and family history are the most prominent factors, there are other factors that make you more susceptible to macular degeneration. They include:

- Smoking doubles the risk of developing the disease
- Diets that lack vegetables & fruits
- Women are more likely to develop the disease
- Macular degeneration is more common among whites
- High blood pressure & cholesterol

3 NO EARLY STAGE SYMPTOMS

The early stages of macular degeneration can be bereft of symptoms. Hence, a complete exam including a yearly dilated eye exam is recommended for people above 50 years of age.

4 TREATMENT

Once diagnosed, Dr. Gordon says there are various treatment options. Vitamins containing high dose antioxidants and zinc are recommended for intermediate stage dry AMD. Your eye care professional will determine whether your macular degeneration is in the intermediate stage, and will make the recommendation to use these vitamins.

The wet form is treated using intravitreal injection of anti VEGF drugs that are given every 4-8 weeks for an average of 2 years or more. These anti VEGF meds include an off label drug called Avastin, and 2 FDA approved drugs namely, Lucentis and Eylea. Numerous research studies are underway for new drugs to treat wet and dry macular degeneration. "We are constantly looking for more efficacious and permanent treatment regimen", states Dr. Gordon, who oversees and directs the macular degeneration studies at TLC Eyecare & Laser Centers.

While rarely resulting in total blindness, the potential significant visual disability caused by macular degeneration can be life altering. Its negative effect on our central vision (crucial for everyday activities), further showcases the importance of regular exams especially as we age.

Visit TLCEyecare.com for more information.

