

Age-related Macular Degeneration



What is Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)?

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a disease associated with ageing that gradually destroys central vision. Central vision is needed for seeing objects clearly and for common everyday tasks such as reading and driving.

In some cases, AMD advances so slowly that people fail to notice the gradual deterioration of their vision. In others, the disease progresses faster and may lead to a permanent loss of central vision.

What are the symptoms of AMD?

- The first signs of AMD involve distortion of vision, rather than loss of sight.
- In many cases, AMD progresses so slowly that people don't notice changes until their vision has already been significantly compromised.

Who is at risk of developing AMD?

- Ageing is the greatest risk factor with prevalence trebling with each decade over 40 years.
- AMD is present in 13 per cent of people between the ages of 70-75 and is the leading cause of vision impairment in Australia.
- Smoking increases the risk of developing AMD.
- Women are at a slightly higher risk than men.
- Family history is a risk factor. Genes have been identified and linked with AMD.

What is the best defence against AMD?

- The early detection of any form of AMD is crucial as some forms of the disease may be arrested with early treatment by an ophthalmologist.
- Regular eye examinations are the key to early detection of AMD before vision loss occurs.
- If changes in the quality of vision are noticed, arrange an appropriate referral to an eye care professional.
- Stopping smoking is the only modifiable risk factor for AMD and will reduce the risk of developing the disease.

Where to go for more information?

Regular eye tests with an eye health professional will detect AMD at an early stage and this may prevent vision loss.

For more information visit www.mdffoundation.com.au or contact the Macular Degeneration Foundation on 1800 111 709.

People with vision loss due to AMD can be assisted to continue to function independently.

Many people with AMD benefit from using low vision services at an early stage with the condition. Low vision devices are available from some optometrists and low vision service providers.

For more information on low vision services and eye health visit www.visioninitiative.org.au