

# Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD): A Quick Guide

## What is AMD?

AMD affects about 2.5 million Canadians.<sup>1</sup> To help you understand AMD, let's break down what it stands for:

### A

#### Age-related:

It is a disease linked to age, specifically people over age 55<sup>1,2</sup>

### M

#### Macular:

It affects the macula, the centre of the retina that allows you to see things right in front of you (e.g., text, faces)<sup>1,3</sup>

### D

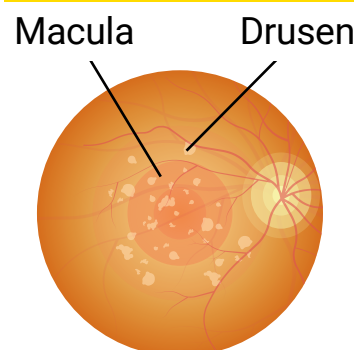
#### Degeneration:

There is a breakdown of cells<sup>3</sup>

## What is dry AMD?

- Occurs when the macula gets thinner and fat deposits called drusen build up underneath it, causing a slow loss of central vision<sup>1,3</sup>
- 3 stages:
  - Early
  - Intermediate
  - Late (also known as geographic atrophy)<sup>1</sup>
- Usually there are **no symptoms early on**, so it is important to have your eyes checked regularly. Your eye doctor will look for drusen and perform tests on your eyes to diagnose AMD<sup>1,3</sup>
- Can occur in one or both eyes and progress differently in each eye<sup>3</sup>
- **Early diagnosis is important to help prevent vision loss<sup>2</sup>**

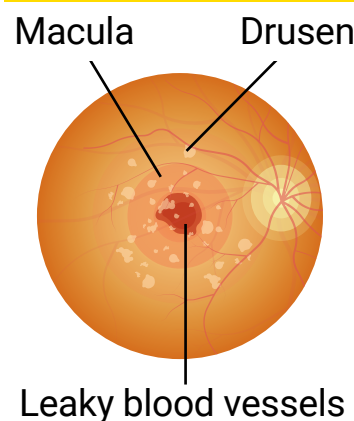
### Dry AMD



## What is wet AMD?

- Occurs in 1 in 10 people living with dry AMD<sup>1</sup>
- Abnormal blood vessels grow beneath the retina (a layer in the back of your eye vital to maintaining vision) and push their way through it
- The abnormal vessels leak fluid and blood into the eye, which scars the macula and results in **blind spots in central vision**<sup>1,3</sup>

### Wet AMD



Ask your doctor for an Amsler Grid (or scan to use an online version) so that you can monitor your vision every week for changes or distortion. You should test each eye separately.



## What will happen to my vision?

As **dry AMD** advances, the first symptom is usually **slight blurring or distortion** in the centre of your vision.<sup>3</sup> Over time, this can get worse and you may notice other symptoms, such as blank spots.<sup>3</sup>

If your dry AMD progresses to **wet AMD**, you may **notice sudden changes in the centre of your vision**, such as:

- Distorted vision (straight lines appear wavy)
- Blurred vision
- Dark spots
- Difficulty seeing details in low light<sup>1</sup>

**It is rare for wet AMD to cause you to lose your vision completely**, because it does not impact peripheral (side) vision and you may only get it in one eye.<sup>1,2</sup> However, having less central vision can make everyday activities, like reading or watching TV, difficult.<sup>1,3</sup>



**Normal vision**



**Dry AMD**  
Fuzzy or distorted vision



**Wet AMD**  
Blind spot in centre of vision

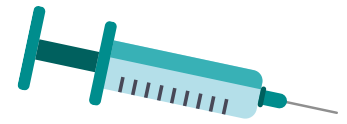
**Contact your doctor right away if you notice sudden vision distortion or significant vision changes.**

## Will I still be able to drive?

Yes, you may still be able to drive if your vision is not greatly affected. In most provinces and territories in Canada, you must have good vision in at least one eye to be able to drive.<sup>4</sup> This is often the case for the early stages of dry AMD.

## What treatment options are available for AMD?

- Eye injections are a treatment option for wet AMD (currently there are no eye injections available for dry AMD in Canada).<sup>1,5</sup>
- These injections will likely be a long-term treatment that can slow the progression of vision loss or even improve your vision.
- How often you receive eye injections will depend on the state of disease in your eye, and will vary from person to person.
- To help maintain the benefits of your treatment, it is important to attend all of your injection appointments.
- Another treatment option is photodynamic therapy, which can slow vision loss and slow or stop the growth of abnormal blood vessels and leakage from them.



**Your dry AMD does not go away when you develop wet AMD, so you may still have vision loss from your dry AMD even if your wet AMD is being treated.<sup>1</sup>** All treatment options can cause serious side effects and may not be suitable for everyone.

## What can I do to help manage my AMD?

Two of the most important things you can do are:

- **Attend all of your eye doctor appointments.**
- **Commit to the treatment plan given to you by your doctor.**

Lifestyle changes may help slow vision loss from AMD, such as:



Maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels<sup>1,3</sup>



Exercise regularly – check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program<sup>1,3</sup>



Add leafy green vegetables and fish to your diet<sup>1,3</sup>



Quit smoking



AREDS 2 nutritional supplements may help delay the progression of AMD, and can help maintain vision and eye health.<sup>6</sup> **Be sure to ask your eye care professional if your supplements meet the AREDS 2 criteria.**

# Are my family members at risk of getting AMD?

Family history is a risk factor for AMD.<sup>1,3</sup> If you have AMD, it is a good idea for family members over 55 years of age to visit their eye doctor regularly to screen for AMD.<sup>3</sup>

## Where can I get more information?



- Online vision tests
- Educational articles and videos



[www.seethepossibilities.ca](http://www.seethepossibilities.ca)



- Dedicated phone line and email
- Educational articles, videos, and webinars



**1-888-626-2995**



[healthinfo@fightingblindness.ca](mailto:healthinfo@fightingblindness.ca)



[www.fightingblindness.ca](http://www.fightingblindness.ca)



- Dedicated phone line
- Educational articles and webinars



**1-866-867-9389**



[www.aqdm.org](http://www.aqdm.org)

1. "Age-Related Macular Degeneration", Fighting Blindness Canada, last modified July 21, 2023, <https://www.fightingblindness.ca/eyehealth/eye-diseases/age-related-macular-degeneration/>
2. "Age-Related Macular Degeneration", HealthLink BC, last modified January 24, 2022, <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/more/aging-well/age-related-macular-degeneration>
3. "Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)", National Eye Institute, last modified June 22, 2021, <https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/eye-conditions-and-diseases/age-related-macular-degeneration>
4. Yazdan-Ashoori, P., & M. ten Hove. Vision and driving: Canada. *J Neuroophthalmol.* 2010 June;30(2):177-185. doi:10.1097/WNO.0b013e3181dfa982
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6. Cruess, A.F., Berger, A., Colleaux, K., et al. Canadian expert consensus: optimal treatment of neovascular age-related macular degeneration. *Can J Ophthalmol.* 2012;47(3):227-235. doi:10.1016/j.jcjo.2012.03.007

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