



Eyecare because we care

# Macular Degeneration

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# What is Macular Degeneration ?

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Macular Degeneration (MD) is a painless condition which affects the macula, the small central part of the retina responsible for central and detailed vision. MD occurs when the layer of the retina responsible for nourishing the macula's light sensitive cells and carrying away waste products, starts to function less effectively as it ages. This causes loss of sight centrally, but leaves the peripheral vision unaffected.

**Early Dry MD:** The most common form of MD (around 10% of people over 65 have some macular changes). It occurs when yellowish deposits called Drusen form under the retina. This is very common as we age and often doesn't affect vision.

**Late Dry MD:** When the number and size of drusen increase, this may cause a gradual reduction in central vision (reading, watching TV, seeing faces etc).

**Late Wet MD:** Is less common. It occurs when tiny, new, abnormal blood vessels begin to grow. They leak blood and fluid, damaging the macula and causing a more rapid loss of central vision.

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## HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE MD?

The most effective way is to have regular eye examinations. Your Optometrist may use photographs and/or scans (OCT) to monitor any changes.

You can also check for signs of Wet MD at home by either using an Amsler Grid (available from your Optometrist), or looking at straight lines such as door, window or picture frames.

## IS THERE TREATMENT FOR MD?

There is currently no treatment for dry MD, however there are a number of things you can do to slow progression and to maximise your vision (see 'How can I protect my eyes')

Wet MD can be treated if caught early. Your Optometrist will refer you to your local Hospital Eye Department if they think you have Wet MD. Treatment is often by injecting a drug into the gel in your eye. This shrinks the new blood vessels which are pushing the macula away from the back of the eye. You may need to have this done every few weeks/months.

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## HOW CAN I PROTECT MY EYES?

### Visual Protection:

#### Protecting your eyes against UV:

**Sunglasses** – for bright days

**Transitions** – when lighting levels change

**UV filter** – clear filter for dull days

### Lifestyle:

- **Don't Smoke** – Smoking significantly increases the risk of MD
  - **Maintain a Healthy Weight**
  - **Eat a Diet rich in Fruits and Leafy Green Vegetables** - spinach, kale, broccoli, peas
  - **Consider Dietary Supplements** – your Optometrist can discuss suitable options (if you smoke/been exposed to asbestos do not take supplements with beta carotene)
  - **Regular Eye Examinations**
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## **PRACTICAL HELP:**

**LIGHTING** – good directional task lighting is very important  
(e.g. Angle-poise lamp)

**TINTS/COATINGS** – to reduce glare and reflections

**MAGNIFIERS** – your optician can advise you or refer to a  
Low Vision Clinic

**LARGE PRINT/TALKING BOOKS**

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## FURTHER SUPPORT:

### **Macular Society –**

Helpline 0300 3030 111

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

### **RNIB –**

Helpline 0303 123 999

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

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