

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a common condition that affects the sharp central vision. It usually first affects people in their 50s and 60s.

The exact cause is unknown. It has been linked to smoking, high blood pressure, being overweight and having a family history of AMD.

AMD affects the central part of your vision, not the peripheral vision. You can get it in one eye or both. Sometimes AMD may be found during a routine eye test before you have symptoms.

The first symptom is often a blurred or distorted area in your vision. If it gets worse, you might struggle to see anything in the middle of your vision. AMD doesn't cause total blindness, but it can make things like reading, watching TV, driving or recognising faces difficult.

Other symptoms include:

- seeing straight lines as wavy or crooked
- objects looking smaller than normal
- colours seeming less bright than they used to
- seeing things that aren't there (hallucinations)

AMD is not painful and doesn't affect the appearance of your eyes.

There are two forms of AMD, dry AMD and wet AMD.

Dry AMD

Dry AMD usually only causes mild symptoms and gets worse very gradually over several years.

Most people with dry AMD retain reasonable vision and remain independent, although the eyesight may not be good enough to drive.

The only treatment for dry AMD is a combination of vitamin and minerals, which can slow down the disease and reduce the risk of sight loss.

Wet AMD

Wet AMD is caused by abnormal blood vessels growing under the macula. If it is not detected loss of vision can happen rapidly over a few weeks or months.

Wet AMD can be treated successfully in many people, but the best results are seen in people where the problem is diagnosed quickly.

Everyone who has macular degeneration should check their vision with an Amsler grid once a week. If you see any change phone Derwent Eye Specialists for an urgent assessment.

How to use the Amsler Grid

1. Wearing any glasses you normally use to read.
2. Hold the grid 30 to 40 cm away from your face in good light.
3. Cover one eye.
4. Look directly at the centre dot with your uncovered eye and keep your eye focused on it.
5. While looking directly at the centre dot, notice in your side vision if all grid lines look straight or if any lines or areas look blurry, wavy, dark or blank.
6. Follow the same steps with the other eye.

If any of the lines look wavy, blurred, dark or blank phone Derwent Eye Specialists for an urgent assessment.

We would rather see you and find that your symptoms are a false alarm than miss something that needs urgent treatment.