

AGE RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION

As we age, the retina (responsible for detecting light and allowing us to see) can start to wear out. If we live long enough then it will probably affect all of us to one degree or another.

There is a specialised area of the retina called the macula which is the portion which gives you your central vision. This area tends to wear out first because it is worked the hardest. When you look at a face or read print you are using your macula to see. If you have this disorder you may notice that your central vision is not quite as sharp as it was.

Sadly the wear and tear does get very slowly worse as the years pass. You may notice that the fine print becomes impossible to read and your optometrist may struggle to correct your vision with spectacles.

Most people have the dry variety of this wear and tear – this is the common sort and causes slow gradual damage. The more worrying type is the wet type. For some reason, which we do not fully understand, some patients with the dry type move onto the wet type. New blood vessels grow under the retina and cause it to lift up. Straight lines look suddenly “wobbly” and distorted.

The wet type can be problematic and cause your vision to deteriorate quickly because the abnormal blood vessels can suddenly bleed. There are treatments available and if your optometrist is concerned that you have this he/she will refer you to the hospital quickly.

You should also check your own vision every day (ONE EYE AT A TIME) to see whether you have developed distortion or whether your vision has suddenly deteriorated. Seek advice if you experience this.

There is some evidence that multivitamins can help slow down the progression of the disorder. Ask your optometrist or your ophthalmologist when you see them.

The most important thing to focus on is that with this condition you will never go blind. Your central vision may be impaired but your peripheral vision (the vision you use to navigate and get around) will be intact.

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These patient information sheets are written for general guidance and are not intended to replace a formal consultation. Each case should be judged on individual merits.

www.eyefinfo.org.uk / www.cataractsurgery.org.uk