

Are My Eyes Old Or Is There A Problem?

By Dr. Jason Kolodziejczyk, Eye Centers of Northwest Ohio

It is widely known that the risks of certain ailments will increase with your birthday experience. Your joints may be a little stiff in the morning, you move a little slower than you once did and the aches in your body help you predict the weather with greater accuracy than the weatherman. However, diminished vision may not necessarily be a byproduct of getting older.

Age related macular degeneration or ARMD is a disease that affects your macula. The macula is the small spot in the center of your retina. The retina is the tissue that captures images that you see. The macula is the specialized section responsible for your sharp, detailed vision. ARMD is a disease that is painless and can progress slowly enough that you are not even aware your vision is changing. It can also be fast acting and progress quickly. Left untreated it could lead to blindness. According to the National Institute of Health,

ARMD is the leading cause of blindness in America in those individuals 60 + years of age.¹

Thankfully your eye doctor can detect small changes in the macula and begin preventive measures long before vision loss occurs. Like most diseases it is critical to discover ARMD early and begin treatment to preserve the sight you have. This is just one of many reasons for having yearly dilated eye exams. Dilating the eye allows the pupil to become large enough that the retina can be closely examined. An Amsler Grid is a great screening tool to monitor change. This grid is made of straight lines that look like a checkerboard. Changes in the Amsler Grid can sometimes detect progression in ARMD. If lines appear bent or curved or missing altogether it could be a sign of progression. With the advent of technology scans of the retina can be done to

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Eyes

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detect microscopic signs of ARMD. If your doctor sees signs of problems in the retina they may perform one of these scans.

There are two types of ARMD, wet and dry. 90% of vision loss is caused by wet ARMD. Most treatments for wet ARMD are designed to stop the leaking of blood vessels that cause severe vision loss. During a clinical trial sponsored by the National Eye Institute it appears that the risk of developing ARMD can be reduced when consuming high levels of antioxidants including lutein and zinc. Though not a cure for ARMD it is

possible to help people with ARMD keep their vision.² This vitamin formula known as AREDS has been found to reduce the conversion of the dry form into the wet form.

There are some things you can do to decrease your odds of losing vision from ARMD. Stop smoking and maintain a healthy weight. Monitor your blood pressure to keep it within a normal range and exercise. Eat a diet high in green leafy vegetables. Lastly, have your eyes evaluated with a dilated eye exam by your Eye Doctor.

¹ NEL.NIH.GOV, September 2009.

² <https://web.emmes.com/study/areds/results/leaflet.pdf>

Instructions for using the Amsler Grid

1. Hold approximately 12"-14" in front of the eye
2. Wear your glasses. Use bifocals if you have them.
3. Test one eye at a time.
4. Look at the center dot only.
5. Check for wavy lines or blank areas near the center.
6. Keep your eye on the center dot – do not scan.
7. Do not check more than once daily.
8. Report any changes immediately.

