

## February is Age-Related Macular Degeneration Month

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### Contact Us

2311 W. Hayes Ave,  
Fremont  
Ohio 43420  
(419) 334 8121

622 Parkway Drive,  
Fostoria  
Ohio 44830  
(419) 435 3482

[www.eyecentersofnwo.com](http://www.eyecentersofnwo.com)

[info@eyecentersofnwo.com](mailto:info@eyecentersofnwo.com)

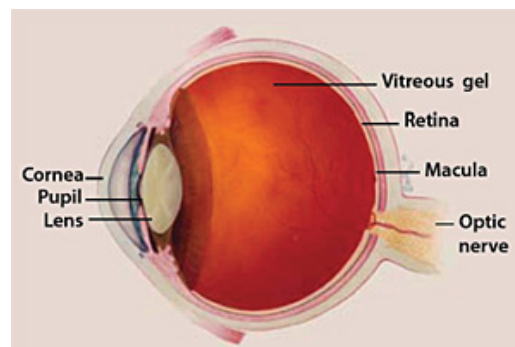
## Your Brain May be Disguising a Blinding Eye Disease

Even though Marlene Klein was having trouble recognizing familiar faces and began to mistake her fingers for carrots as she chopped vegetables, she had no idea she was slowly losing her vision to a leading cause of blindness, age-related macular degeneration (AMD). That's because her brain was compensating for the developing blind spots in her vision. Marlene is not alone. According to a recent Harris Poll survey, most Americans are unaware that people do not always experience symptoms before losing vision to eye disease. During February, The Eye Centers of Northwest Ohio and the American Academy of Ophthalmology are urging people to protect themselves from vision loss from AMD by getting a baseline eye exam by age 40.



More than 2 million Americans are living with the most advanced forms of AMD, a number that is expected to reach 4.4 million by 2050. It is the leading cause of blindness among white Americans over 40, and it's a leading cause of irreversible vision loss throughout the world.

AMD happens when part of the retina called the macula is damaged. It's the part of the eye that delivers sharp, central vision needed to see objects straight ahead. Over time, the loss of central vision can interfere with everyday activities, such as the ability to drive, read, and see faces clearly.

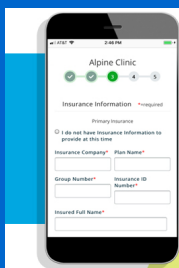


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**Courtesy: The American Academy of Ophthalmology**  
[www.aao.org/](http://www.aao.org/)

Because AMD often has no early warning signs, getting regular comprehensive eye exams is critical.

Eye Doctors have more tools than ever before to diagnose AMD earlier, and to treat it better. But these advances cannot help patients whose disease is undiagnosed, or patients who are unaware of the seriousness of their disease.

More needs to be done to elevate eye health as a priority. According to that same Harris Poll, while 81 percent of respondents say they do everything they can to protect the health of their eyes, only 11 percent say eye appointments top their list of the most important doctor appointments to keep.

## New Research Suggests Alcohol May Not Be Safe for People with Age-related Macular Degeneration

### AMD steals sight without warning

**It's the leading cause of blindness among older Americans.**

You may lose central vision before realizing you have age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

EyeCare America® offers free exams to qualifying seniors.

[aao.org/eyecare-america](http://aao.org/eyecare-america)



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Even though Dry January is over, new research suggests you may want to consider keeping the no-alcohol challenge going all year, especially if you're among the nearly 2 million Americans who have age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a sight-threatening eye condition, caution Eye Centers of Northwest Ohio and the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

A recent study published in Current Eye Research evaluated seven studies looking at the relationship between alcohol consumption and AMD. The researchers found that moderate to high alcohol consumption was linked to a higher incidence of early AMD, compared with people who didn't drink or who drank occasionally.

## Don't let your vision go up in smoke

### Smoking raises your risk of age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Ever smoked? Get a medical eye exam to assess the health of your eyes.

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## Who is at risk for AMD?

Older people  
(60 and older)



Smokers



Caucasians



People with a family history of AMD



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## Growing older = growing AMD risk

### Seniors are at greatest risk for age-related macular degeneration (AMD).



**Age 65:**

1 out of 100 people have AMD



**Age 80:**

12 out of 100 people have AMD

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Why should people with AMD or at risk of developing AMD be concerned about alcohol consumption? AMD is the most common cause of blindness in Americans over the age of 50, affecting about 2.1 million people nationwide. As the population ages, the estimated number of people with AMD is expected to more than double to 5.44 million by 2050.

AMD is a degenerative disease that damages the macula, part of the retina responsible for central vision. Over time, the loss of central vision can interfere with everyday activities, such as the ability to drive, read, and see faces clearly.

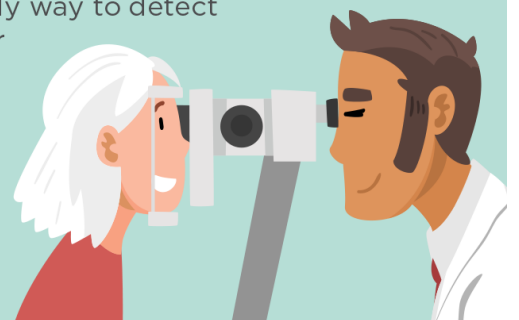
## Detect AMD now, save sight later

### Get an eye exam every 1 to 2 years after you turn 65.

A medical eye exam is the only way to detect and slow age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

EyeCare America® offers free exams to qualifying seniors.

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While genetics do play a part in the development of AMD, there are several lifestyle choices you can make to decrease your chances of losing vision to AMD, including:

1. **Healthy eating.** Ever heard the old saying about carrots being good for the eyes? It's true. So are leafy greens, colorful fruits and vegetables, and fatty fish. Eating a vitamin-rich diet can help protect your vision against age-related macular degeneration and other eye diseases.
2. **Manage your body weight and overall health.** Hypertension, high cholesterol, and heart disease are all risk factors for age-related macular degeneration. Exercise is a good way to combat some of these health risks.
3. **Don't smoke.** Studies show smokers are more likely to get eye diseases including AMD, compared with people who never smoked.
4. **Get a dilated eye exam.** During this routine exam, an eye doctor will be able to spot eye diseases early — sometimes before you notice any symptoms — and get you the best care to protect your vision. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends all healthy adults get a comprehensive eye exam by age 40 to screen for blinding eye diseases.

## How can you protect your vision?

Anyone can develop AMD, but people with a healthy lifestyle have a far lower risk.



Eat eye-healthy foods



Avoid smoking



Exercise regularly



Get regular eye exams

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