

## Severe Vision Loss - Macular Degeneration

**M**acular degeneration is the leading cause of severe vision loss in people over age 60. It occurs when the small central portion of the retina, known as the macula, deteriorates. The retina is the light-sensing nerve tissue at the back of the eye. Because the disease develops as a person ages, it is often referred to as age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Although macular degeneration is almost never a totally blinding condition, it can be a source of significant visual disability.

There are two main types of age-related macular degeneration:

**Dry form.** The “dry” form of mac-



ular degeneration is characterized by the presence of yellow deposits, called drusen, in the macula. A few small drusen may not cause changes in vision; however, as they grow in size and increase in number, they may lead to a dimming or distortion of vision that people find most noticeable when they read.

**Wet form.** The “wet” form of macular degeneration is characterized by the growth of abnormal blood vessels from the choroid underneath the macula. This is called choroidal neovascularization. These blood vessels leak blood and fluid into the retina, causing distortion of vision that makes straight lines look wavy, as well as blind spots and loss of central vision.

Most people with macular degeneration have the dry form of the disease and will not lose central

vision. However, the dry form of macular degeneration can lead to the wet form. Although only about 10% of people with macular degeneration develop the wet form, they make up the majority of those who experience serious vision loss from the disease.

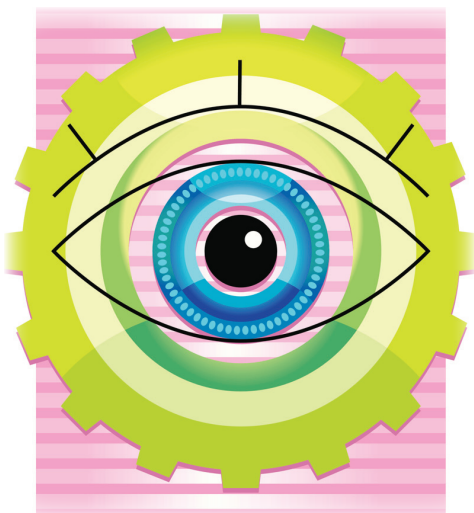
It is very important for people with macular degeneration to monitor their eyesight carefully and see their eye doctor on a regular basis.

### What Are the Risk Factors for Macular Degeneration?

As the name suggests, age-related macular degeneration is more common in older adults.

Macular degeneration may also be hereditary, meaning it can be passed on from parents to children.

*(Over)*



### **Macular Degeneration** (Continued)

If someone in your family has or had the condition you may be at higher risk for developing macular degeneration. Talk to your eye doctor about your individual risk.

Smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and being white are also risk factors for macular degeneration.

### **How Is Macular Degeneration Diagnosed?**

Age-related macular degeneration can be detected in a routine eye exam. One of the most common early signs of macular degeneration is the presence of drusen -- tiny yellow deposits under the retina. Your doctor can see these when examining your eyes. Your doctor may also ask you to look at an Amsler grid -- a pattern of straight lines that resemble a checkerboard. Some of the straight lines may appear wavy to you, or

you may notice that some of the lines are missing. These can be signs of macular degeneration.

### **What Treatments Are Available for Macular Degeneration?**

There is currently no cure for macular degeneration, but treatments may prevent severe vision loss or slow the progression of the disease considerably. Several options are available, including:

- Anti-angiogenesis drugs.
- Vitamins.
- Laser therapy.
- Photodynamic laser therapy.
- Low vision aids.

### **What Is the Outlook for People With Macular Degeneration?**

People rarely lose all of their vision from age-related macular degeneration. They may have

poor central vision, but they are still able to perform many normal daily activities.

The wet form of macular degeneration is a leading cause of irreversible vision loss. When both eyes are affected, you may experience a significant decrease in your quality of life.

The dry form of age-related macular degeneration is much more common and tends to progress more slowly, allowing you to keep most of your vision.

Unfortunately, even after wet macular degeneration treatment, the condition can recur. Because of this, individuals with macular degeneration must test their own vision regularly and follow the recommendations of their ophthalmologist. Successful and timely treatment will slow the rate of vision loss and often improve vision.

Source: webmd.com

## **Benefits Corner**

### **All about your Vision Coverage**

The County Health Pool contracts with Vision Service Plan for its vision benefit that is offered to the County Health Pool membership. VSP provides exceptional customer service, broad network of providers and discounts for our membership.

This past year patient savings;

- 24% of CHP employees paid no-out-of-pocket expenses for frames in 2012.
- Those who did pay out-of-pocket expenses spent an average of \$35.00.
- VSP's cost controlled lens options have saved CHP patients approx. \$87,000, an average of \$36.49 per service.

Using your VSP benefits (only if you are enrolled in the Vision Plan through CHP)

- To locate an eyecare provider visit [vsp.com](http://vsp.com) or call 800-877-7195.
- To review your benefit coverage and additional savings available through vsp, visit [vsp.com](http://vsp.com) or [www.ctsi.org](http://www.ctsi.org).
- As a reminder, there is no ID card necessary at your appointment, just tell them that you have coverage through CHP/VSP and they will be able to locate you in the system.