



er 50 Need to Know About AMD

AMD

8 Top Myths About AMD

by **Judy Koutsky** Health Writer





AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (AMD) isn't exactly known for its subtlety: It's not only a mouthful to say, it's the leading cause of vision loss in people over the age of 50 in the United States, according to Cleveland Clinic. But, as prevalent as the condition is, there's still a ton of mystery that surrounds it. We reveal some of the biggest misperceptions about AMD and share





MYTH: You'll know right away if you have AMD.

FACT: "The vast majority of patients I diagnose with macular degeneration do not know that they have it," says Ming Wang, M.D., Ph.D., an ophthalmologist at Wang Vision Institute, a private practice in Nashville, TN. "It generally creates only subtle vision changes at first or occurs with no symptoms at all. Only more advanced stages of the condition cause major vision

impairment." For this reason, it is essential to have regular eye exams.

People who do have early symptoms of macular degeneration may experience: blurred central vision, blank or dark spots in vision, and curved vision (such as seeing





MYTH: AMD leads to total blindness.

FACT: AMD can contribute to vision loss, but not always blindness. "Age-related macular degeneration affects the macula, the most central part of our retina," says Caesar Luo, M.D., a board certified vitreo-retinal surgeon in Oakland, CA. This area of the retina is responsible for our most discriminating and focused vision—it's what we use to read and recognize faces.

"Even in the worst forms of AMD, the peripheral vision will remain functional," says Dr. Luo. "Often my patients will still be able to navigate while walking, dress themselves, and learn how to use their





MYTH: Eating carrots will improve your vision.

FACT: Not exactly. "Unfortunately, if glasses or contact lenses are needed for vision correction, extra vitamins in the diet cannot take away or reduce that need,"

says Dr. Wang. "Vitamin supplementation also cannot improve acuity, or how low you can read down the eye chart with vision correction." Those vision issues are typically caused by a mismatch between the length of the eye and curve on the eye. This mismatch creates nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism, all of which would need to be corrected with





How Nutrients Do Help Eye Health

Antioxidants, like vitamins A (found in carrots!), C, and E, help protect the eyes from developing drusen, the debris buildup in the innermost layers of the retina that can contribute to AMD. What's more, good nutrition does in fact promote good eye health over a lifetime and may reduce the risk of several vision-threatening diseases, says Dr. Wang. So yes, keep filling your plate with colorful produce and work in E-rich snacks like nuts and seeds.





MYTH: Smoking doesn't affect vision.

FACT: Smoking is one of the biggest risk factors for AMD, according to research in the *Journal of Ophthalmology*. In fact, it doubles someone's risk of having macular degeneration, says Nathan D. Rock, O.D.,

an optometrist at Wang Vision Institute.

Because the macula has a very delicate blood supply, its vessels are particularly prone to dangerous chemicals like tar.

"While we don't understand the link with certainty, it's possible that tar damages the small blood vessels, which then contributes to the development of the abnormal waste,





MYTH: Many young people get AMD.

FACT: Not really. "True macular degeneration is an age-related condition. It is very rare to see macular degeneration in someone under the age of 40 to 50," says Dr. Wang. "Risk has been shown to steadily increase with increasing age. However, there are conditions which can mimic macular degeneration and cause similar vision affects that can affect younger patients."

Children and young adults may experience similar symptoms if they've inherited one of the rare forms of juvenile macular degeneration, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Unfortunately, there's no currently no way to prevent or slow vision loss with these





MYTH: Everyone with wet AMD will eventually go

blind.

FACT: Fifteen years ago, this was basically true, says Dr. Luo. "We had no effective treatment for wet AMD, and ultimately all patients would proceed to legal blindness." This is not true today. This most advanced stage of AMD is caused by abnormal blood vessels that leak fluid or blood into the retina. Thanks to anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (anti-VEGF) medication, doctors can now halt the progression of wet AMD and actually improve vision. The key to is act quickly, because unlike dry AMD, the wet form can progress quickly. The only downside? The medicine must be injected into your eye. ([We can help you get over those fears though!](#))





MYTH: Dry ADM is easier to treat than the wet form.

FACT: "Unfortunately, there isn't any treatment for dry macular degeneration," says Dr. Rock. "There is, however, a special formulation of vitamins called AREDS 2 that's been shown to reduce the risk of progression for those with intermediate-stage AMD, but it doesn't treat the condition itself or help to improve vision," says Dr. Rock. Research by the National Eye Institute found that this unique combination of antioxidants (including vitamins C, E, zinc, copper, lutein, and zeaxanthin) can reduce the risk of advanced AMD by 25% over five years.

Ask your doctor if the supplement could be beneficial for you.







MYTH: Reading in dim light will damage your eyes.

FACT: No matter what your mom might have told you, this isn't true and it has no impact on AMD. "Reading in dim light is not inherently dangerous, though there is an ideal balance between the amount of light on the object you are focusing on, such a printed book or a television, and the surrounding environment," says Dr. Wang. If you read something lit in a completely dim room (or read a dimly lit page) it can cause strain on the focusing system and make the experience less enjoyable. Who wants that? Flip on those lights instead.



1 OF 10

We Chose These Just For You...



9 Ways to Help a Loved One With Wet AMD



7 Sneaky Signs of Wet AMD



These Antioxidant-Rich Snacks Slow Wet AMD Progression

Sign Up for Our Newsletters!

You'll get health news, advice, and inspiration delivered right to your inbox.

EMAIL ADDRESS

SIGN UP

PRIVACY POLICY

TERMS OF USE

ADVERTISING POLICY

ADVERTISE WITH US

REMEDY HEALTH MEDIA SITES

DO NOT SELL MY INFO

About Us

Editorial Policy

Contact Us



Follow us!



© 2021 Remedy Health Media, LLC
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED