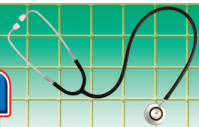


Eye on Health



Early Diagnosis, Effective Monitoring And Treatment Can Help Prevent Vision Loss From AMD

(NAPSA)—There's good news for those at risk for, or in the early stages of, age-related macular degeneration, or AMD—an eye disease that is also a leading cause of vision loss among people ages 50 and older.

Early diagnosis, effective monitoring and appropriate treatment can all help to prevent vision loss from AMD.

To help educate the public on AMD, Prevent Blindness, the nation's oldest eye health and safety organization, created the free online resource "The AMD Learning Center."

Understanding AMD

Millions of Americans are currently affected by AMD—a condition that causes damage to the macula, a small spot near the center of the retina. This is the part of the eye needed for sharp, central vision. It also makes it possible to see objects that are straight ahead.

The exact cause of AMD is unknown, but risk factors for the disease include age, smoking, and history of cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Caucasians are more susceptible, as are patients with a family history of AMD.

Some signs of AMD include:

- Straight lines—such as telephone poles, the sides of buildings or streetlight poles—look wavy.
- Written text and/or type can appear blurry.
- A dark or empty spot may block the center of your vision.

If you notice any of these changes, it's recommended that you schedule a dilated eye exam as soon as possible.



When AMD progresses, it can rob people of their central vision and often the ability to read a book, recognize a face, see fine details and distinguish some colors.

Dry And Wet AMD

There are two forms of AMD: "dry" and "wet." Dry AMD is the most common form of the disease. Vision loss usually progresses slowly. In some cases, it will progress to the most advanced wet AMD.

Wet AMD is less common, but more rapidly threatening to vision. It causes tiny blood vessels under the retina to leak or break open, distorting vision and causing scar tissue to form. Wet AMD currently affects an estimated 2.2 million Americans age 50 and older, according to the recent report "The Future of Vision: Forecasting the Prevalence and Costs of Vision Problems" prepared by Prevent Blindness. Due to the rapidly aging population, these numbers are expected to grow.

Monitoring for signs of wet AMD can be helped by using a method called the Amsler grid, or the ForeseeHome™ AMD Monitoring Program (www.foreseehome.com) for monitoring progression of dry AMD to wet AMD, from Notal Vision, Ltd.

For more information, visit the AMD Learning Center at www.preventblindness.org/amd or call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020.