



# Eye on Health

## Age-Related Macular Degeneration Genes Found

(NAPSA)—Scientists now have a few more genetic clues about a leading cause of visual impairment and blindness in older Americans—age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

That's because a large-scale collaborative study, supported by the National Eye Institute (NEI), part of the National Institutes of Health, has identified three new genes associated with this eye disease—two playing a role in the cholesterol pathway in the eye. AMD gradually destroys sharp, central vision. Central vision is needed for seeing objects clearly and for common daily tasks such as reading and driving. The results of the study were published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Said Paul A. Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., NEI director, "This study increases our understanding of DNA variations that predict individual risks of AMD and provides clues for developing effective therapies."

The study shed light on a new biological pathway for AMD disease development, by uncovering genes in the high-density lipoprotein (HDL) pathway associated with AMD risk. HDLs are among a family of lipoproteins that transport essential fats, such as cholesterol, through the bloodstream. It's believed that early stages of AMD are affected by accumulated products of cholesterol and other fats in a layer of cells in the back of the eye.

The relationship between HDL cholesterol levels in the blood and AMD is still unclear, but the



**A leading cause of blindness in older Americans—age-related macular degeneration—may be closer to a cure.**

researchers have uncovered a major biochemical pathway that may be a target for future AMD treatments.

Meanwhile, your lifestyle can play a role in reducing your risk of developing AMD. Here are a few hints from the NEI:

- Eat green leafy vegetables and fatty fish such as salmon.
- Don't smoke.
- Maintain normal blood pressure.
- Watch your weight.
- Exercise.

### Learn More

The National Eye Institute leads the federal government's research on the visual system and eye diseases. NEI supports basic and clinical science programs that result in the development of sight-saving treatments. For more information, visit [www.nei.nih.gov](http://www.nei.nih.gov). For more information about AMD, visit [www.nei.nih.gov/health](http://www.nei.nih.gov/health) or call (301) 496-5248.