

Age-related Macular Degeneration

The [macula](#) is the part of the eye that controls your central vision. As you age, the macula may become damaged, resulting in [age-related macular degeneration \(AMD\)](#). AMD is a **leading cause of vision loss** in the United States.

65% of individuals in the United States with AMD are women⁴

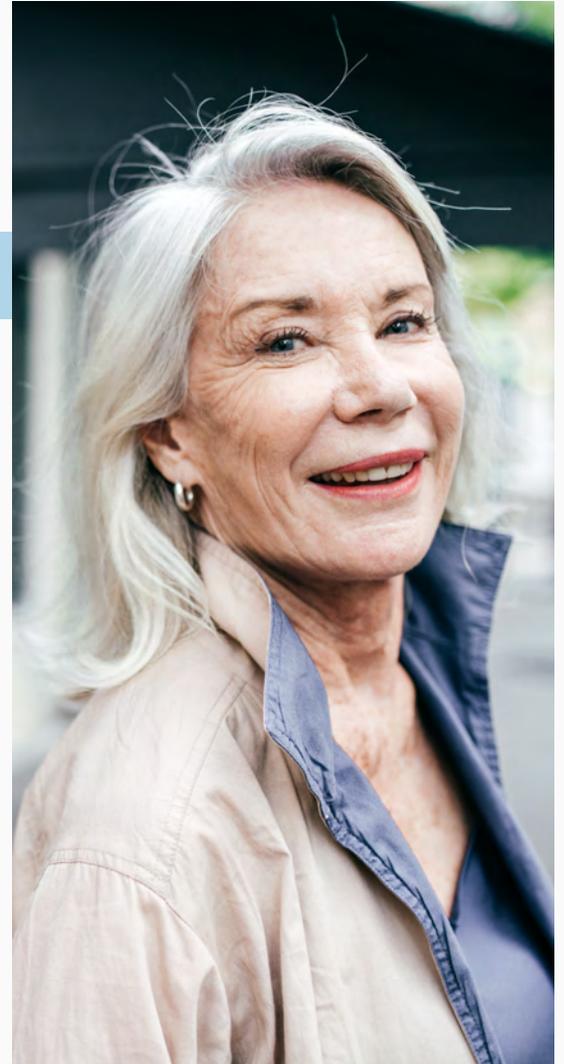
Types of AMD

Dry

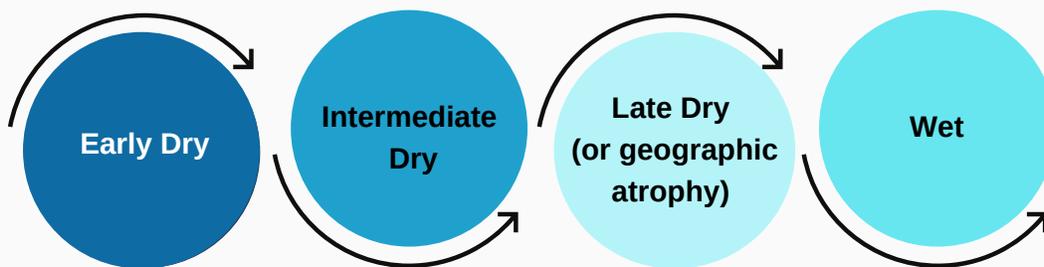
- Most common (85-90% of AMD cases)
- Occurs as the macula accumulates protein and thins with age
- Can occur in early to late stages
- Progression happens slowly over years, and generally one eye at a time

Wet

- Less common (10-15% of AMD cases)
- Occurs when small blood vessels begin to leak into the macula
- Dry AMD can convert to wet AMD
- Always considered late stage
- Usually leads to faster vision loss



Stages of AMD



Increased risk for AMD is associated with:

- Age – 55 years or older
- Family history of AMD
- Race – White
- Smoking



Common Symptoms

Mild to moderate AMD may have no symptoms, but as the disease progresses, early symptoms may include:

- Blurry or distorted vision
- Trouble seeing in low lighting

Advanced AMD may result in:

- Difficulty reading, driving, or recognizing familiar faces
- Straight lines appearing wavy
- A dark, empty area or blind spot in the center of vision

Diagnosing AMD

Using a [dilated eye exam](#), early AMD can be diagnosed by identifying small, yellow deposits or pigment changes in the [retina](#). Disease progression or the development of wet AMD can be assessed with additional diagnostic tests during the eye exam.

Regular eye exams are crucial to identifying early AMD. Taking early steps to prevent the progression of the disease can help preserve your sight.

Treatment Options

Dry AMD: There is currently no treatment for early AMD, although new therapies are in development, particularly for late dry AMD. Dry AMD occurs on a spectrum, so talk to your provider about the best next steps for you, depending on the stage of your AMD. Certain dietary supplements may be recommended to target vitamins and minerals that may help to slow disease progression (e.g., omega-3, vitamins C and E, lutein, zeaxanthin, and zinc).



Wet AMD: A combination of injections into the eye and laser treatments are available.

- **Anti-VEGF injections** are the most commonly used treatment to slow or stop damage from abnormal blood vessels produced by AMD.
- **Photocoagulation** is a minimally invasive procedure that uses a laser to treat small areas of the macula, sealing off leaky blood vessels.
- **Photodynamic therapy** injects a light-sensitive drug (verteporfin) into the bloodstream that accumulates around the leaky blood vessels in the eye and seals off the vessels when activated by laser treatment.

An AMD diagnosis or the first signs of vision loss can be overwhelming. Professional and peer-to-peer support can be helpful when adjusting to vision impairment. For more information, see the [Resources and Support Groups](#) section of the SWHR Guide to Women's Eye Health.