

## Protecting Your Vision from AMD

**Husain:** So age-related macular degeneration, or AMD, is the most common cause or leading cause of blindness in the world.

The early form of the disease really is mostly detected on examination. That is why a routine eye exam is very important. So anybody with a high risk of macular degeneration does need a regular dilated eye exam, at least once a year.

The older we get, the higher the chance of getting macular degeneration. So people over the age of sixty, and specifically seventy, are at a much higher risk. Anybody over the age of fifty could get macular degeneration.

Somewhere between thirty and fifty percent of macular degeneration tends to run in families. So it is very important that if there is a family history of macular degeneration to be checked on a routine basis for occurrence of macular degeneration.

So early phases of the disease, either people have no symptoms at all or may have very subtle symptoms such as needing more light to see or better contrast to read or problems with dark adaptation. That means suddenly if they go from a very bright environment into a darker environment it will take them longer to see.

So both wet and dry AMD are forms of AMD. All AMD starts as dry AMD. It's only in the late form that a smaller group of people can suddenly develop leading or swelling in the center part of the retina in the macula. This is called wet AMD or wet macular degeneration and it presents a sudden loss of central vision. And then people would have problem reading, writing, recognizing faces or driving.

The dry form of macular degeneration which is actually feed in the late form, can present with a slow change in central vision, leading to eventually problems with reading and writing.

Now at this point there are three FDA approved medications that we use for treatment of wet macular degeneration. If the disease is caught at an early stage, there is significant improvement in vision, or reversal of loss of vision, in about thirty to forty percent of the people.

So the exact cause of AMD is not completely understood and there is a lot of research ongoing to try to figure out why macular degeneration happens.

The central part of the retina, which is called macula, is damaged or affected and this leads to problems with our sharpest focus, our best vision, which is our central part of our vision. Peripheral vision usually does not get affected in AMD. Really more the reading, writing, central vision that is affected in macular degeneration.

In terms of treatment for dry macular degeneration, the National Eye Institute carried a very big study which was called as the Age Related Eye Disease Study and came up with this formulation of vitamins

which is called RxAREDS2 formula. You can slow down the progression from the intermediate to the late form of the disease by taking the RX vitamins.

The good news is that there are so many treatments that are currently available as well as there is so much of research going on which hopefully will even offer better and more longer lasting treatments in the future.

The earlier it's detected, the better are the options of preventing vision loss and preserving your vision for a long period of time.

The fact that there is so much of emphasis now and research in macular degeneration would help us bring us closer and closer to cures for macular degeneration.